

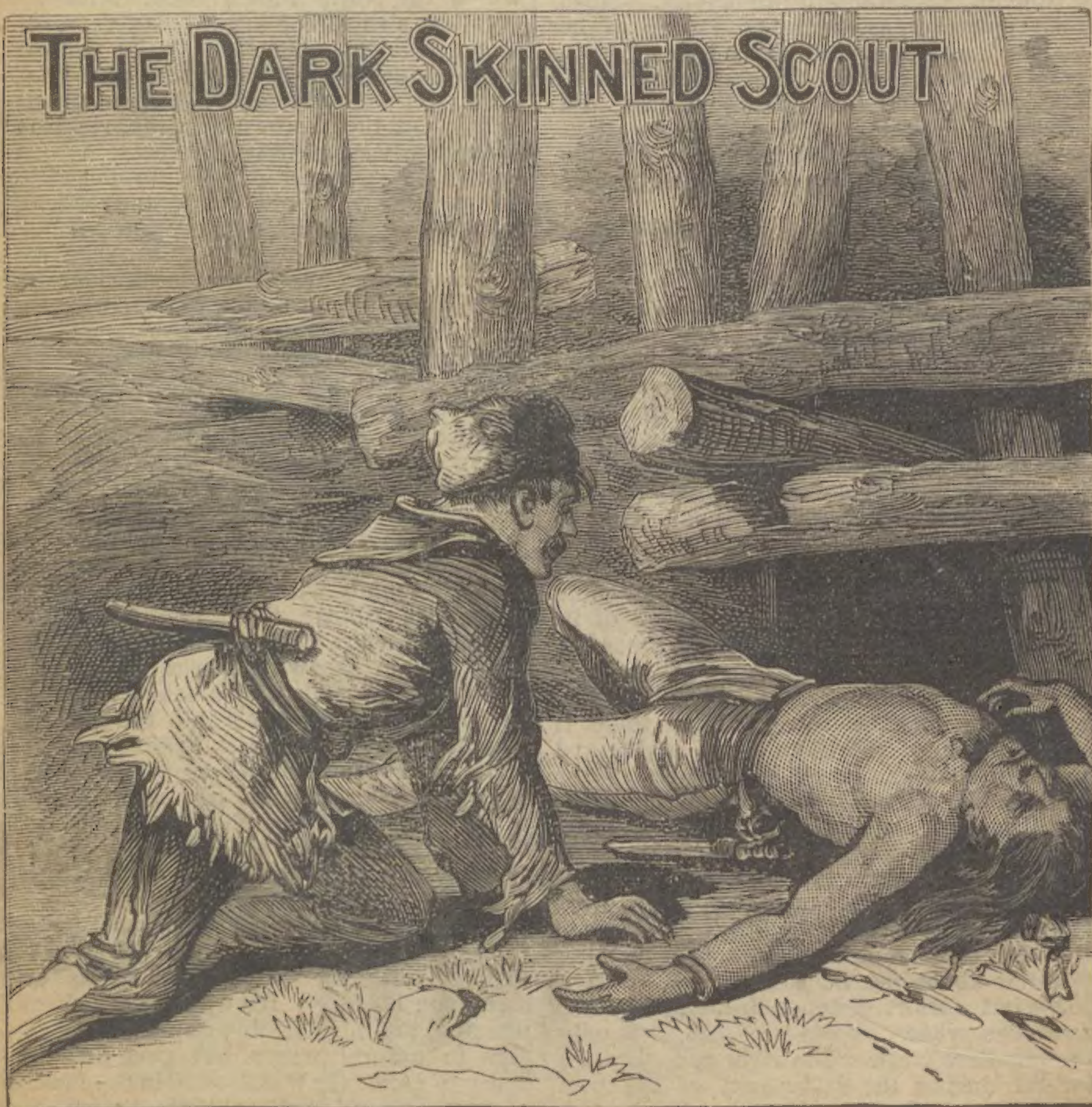
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"MUST GIT THAT CHAP OUT OF THE WAY," SAID SILAS. "WONDER IF THE RED IS DRUNK?"

The Dark-Skinned Scout;

OR,

The Freebooters of the Mississippi.

BY LIEUT.-COL. HAZELTINE.

CHAPTER I.

THE CLANRICARD CLAN.

WHEN Ferdinand De Soto, the famed Castilian adventurer, and discoverer of the great "Father of Waters," planted the cross upon that mighty river, taking possession of it "in the name of God and Spain," even his fertile imagination could not have conceived a tithe of that river's future history. Spain, then powerful, asserted the justice of her claims, and prepared to defend them. But, what a change time has wrought! Spain tottered and fell like a drunken man; and, as she lies prostrate in the gutter of nations, the world stands by and laughs in derision, just as the idle urchin jeers at the besotted man.

But, while nations change, the Mississippi changes not. True, now it bears upon its bosom the burden of a mighty commerce, and now again the war-craft. Now her waters sing their song of peace, and now again give back the echo of a thousand throats belching forth their fire and death; now her waters run clear like bubbling springs, and now again are streaked with human gore. But, the river changes not; it clasps in its parental arms three thousand miles of children States, affectionate alike to all.

Perhaps, if we except the present, no period in its history contained more startling events, than that of the earlier period of its navigation. And of those early times we write.

The scenery through the interior of Arkansas is wildly beautiful, and, if there is any portion of the State more lovely and romantic than another, it is the valley of the St. Francis, a river which rises in the State of Missouri, and, flowing almost parallel with the Mississippi, about thirty miles from the border of the State through which it courses, empties its waters into the great river about fifty miles below and opposite the city of Memphis. There is something peculiar about the St. Francis. It is navigable but a short distance from its mouth, and even where vessels are seen, it is only the smallest craft. The river runs through (or did, during the latter part of the past century) an almost unbroken forest. Its banks are very high and steep, and the stranger traveling through that region would not be aware of the presence of the stream until

he was standing upon its very banks. Its waters are clear and spring-like. About forty miles from its mouth, and where the river is not more than a hundred yards in width, it suddenly widens and deepens, assuming rather the form of a lake than a river. Its distance here is nearly three-quarters of a mile in width, extending perhaps four miles in length. Then comes a narrow strip of water, then another lake, and then other narrow channels and other lakes. There are six of this description of lakes, altogether extending a distance of twenty-five miles.

The eastern bank of this line of lakes consisted of broken bluffs and deep ravines into which the water eddied back, forming an excellent shelter for small boats, or a place of concealment. On these bluffs, and overhanging the ravines, the giant cypress-tree grew, so thick as almost to shut out the daylight. On the western bank the spectacle presented was entirely different. A broad prairie lay stretched out before the vision, far as the eye could reach, and, although monotonous, still it could claim its share of beauty.

It was late in the afternoon of the month of May—which, in Arkansas, is perhaps the most delightful season of the year. The sun, with an almost blood-red tint, was setting slowly down behind the prairie. Far out upon the open space, a herd of buffalo were feeding, while now and then were to be seen the sportive deer or the fleet antelope, skipping about in playful glee. The singing of the meadow-lark, and the flapping of the wings of the prairie-hen, the lowing of the bison, or the bleat of the young fawn, were the only sounds which broke the otherwise impressive stillness.

On the eastern shore scarcely a sound was heard. Just as twilight was deepening, a small boat, propelled by a single oarsman, shot from the river below into the first lake. The little draft darted swiftly through the water, and soon reached one of the concealed harbors. The oarsman paused, and, rising to his feet, looked searchingly up and down the lake; and then, as if satisfied, with a single stroke of his oars, he shot into the harbor and was lost to view.

The stranger was tall, although not powerfully made. His features were smooth and regular, while not a trace of beard was to be seen upon his face. His eyes were dark and piercing, and his hair flowed over his shoulders in natural waves, but gave little evidence of care. He was dressed in the fashion of the backwoods hunter of the period, viz: moccasins, buckskin leggings, adorned down the outer seam with a bright red fringe. His shirt was of the same material, very profuse-

ly fringed around the bottom, the arms, and the neck. His cap was of undressed deer-skin. An ornamented belt was tightly bound around his waist, while visible was a large sheath knife, and a brace of highly polished silver-mounted pistols. Resting upon the side of the boat was a long rifle, which was also richly ornamented. The face gave evidence of youth, and was not so browned by exposure as one would expect to find in a hunter.

As the boat shot from view, he exclaimed, as if speaking to himself:

"By St. Mars, I think last night's work will long be remembered!"

The young man paused after reaching the distance of a few yards from the main water, and then, taking a small whistle from his pocket, he blew a shrill blast. There was no response. He repeated the call, and still all was silent.

"It is very strange," he said. "She is not wont to be so tardy!" and the blast was repeated. Still no answer came.

The speaker sprung upon shore, and mounted with a rapid step a sharp ledge which skirted the strip of water. Having reached the summit, he struck into a narrow path, and winding his way along through a thick undergrowth of shrubbery, he at length emerged into an open space consisting perhaps of half an acre of ground. A small log-house, or, more properly speaking, hut, stood at the further extremity of the clearing, while directly in its rear was a huge pile of rocks. Considerable taste was displayed in the grounds around the building, plainly indicating the presence of a woman. Vines were creeping over rude lattice-work of twigs and poles, while bright flowers dotted, here and there, the space in front.

As the stranger entered the open space he paused, and while the crimson mounted to his face, he placed his hand to his brow, as if suffering pain. All was quiet in and around the hut, but as the stranger approached, he called:

"Lola! Lola!" No answer came, and he added, as a look of fury settled upon his fine face:

"If those red demons have broken their treaty with me, bitterly will they repent it. I have observed that Black Wolf appears morose and dissatisfied of late, and that his snake-like eyes have been fixed upon Lola with a wicked expression, whenever he has visited us. But, I do not think he would dare molest her. The Rover of the Mississippi, is too much feared for even that relentless savage to venture to approach him in any other than a friendly way. His son certainly would no less brook an injury from the savage.

Francois Clanricard entered the hut. It contained but one small apartment, and it was by a single glance that he saw it was occupied by no living soul save himself. He passed to the rear of the apartment, and, touching a spring in what appeared only to be a rocky wall, a huge door swung back, its massive hinges shrieking as if in very agony. A large tin lamp was burning within. It was placed in a niche in the rock, but in the darkness, its ray was so feeble that it appeared only to lend an additional gloom to the place. Seizing this lamp, young Francois passed rapidly through a long hall, and at length entered what, by the dim rays, appeared to be a large room. In a few moments a brilliant light shone through the apartment, and he looked eagerly around. But no human face met his gaze.

"Not here! Gone! A dread oppresses me, and if the son of Clanricard *could* be a coward, he is one now. But, I must search further. Oh! my sweet sister Lola, where can she be?"

Let us briefly describe the apartment in which young Francois was standing.

In the center of the room, and attached to the stony arch above, was suspended a magnificent chandelier, containing wax tapers, which Francois had just lighted, and which cast a glare into every part of the cave, so clear and brilliant that the smallest object was distinctly visible to the eye. The apartment was perhaps forty feet square. The walls, or sides of the cave, were hung with blue and scarlet drapery, while the floor, which was not altogether smooth or even, was covered with a thick carpeting of hemp. Around the cave, with the exception of about ten feet of space at the extreme rear of the room, were three circles of seats, the frames of which were rustic in their construction, having evidently been formed from boughs cut from the neighboring trees. They were made very comfortable by the addition of large cushions, as various in color as the rainbow, giving their own evidence that they had been *borrowed* from ship and from mansion, from office and from castle, from church and from governmental palaces.

At the back of the cave, and occupying a space of ten feet, was a kind of throne, or elevated platform, covered and surrounded by the richest tapestry. A large chair, covered with crimson velvet, occupied the center, while, by its sides, on either hand, were other seats, less imposing in appearance, and a single step lower down. Directly in front of this throne was a large table, upon which were the fragments of a meal—dried venison, fruits, jellies, and broken bottles of wine. It had evidently been prepared for *two* guests. In a niche, which was concealed by the

heavy drapery, stood a bed of more than ordinary whiteness, while near this were similar recesses, but their arrangements were less tasty and complete. Such was the cavern of the famed Clanricard, the Rover of the Mississippi.

Francois, by an effort, threw off the disquietude by which he was oppressed, and then sprung forward to the aperture where the bed was concealed and gazed within. The bed had been undisturbed. He next proceeded to the table. There were evidences of a struggle at this point. A chair was overturned, a bottle broken, a plate dashed to pieces upon the floor, and, bending down, Francois found upon the carpet the polished stiletto which his sister always had carried about her person. He also found a letter signed by Lorenzo Clanricard, recommending strongly to the favor of his daughter Lola, one Captain Hernando Cortini, a Spanish gentleman of high renown. Francois gazed earnestly at the note for a moment, and then exclaimed:

"That is a forgery. My father *never* penned that note. No Spanish *gentleman* would be received by him. His hatred for the race is too bitter, and his wrongs too great, to permit of any intercourse. Besides, he is an outlaw, and Castilian *gentlemen* do not mingle with such as we are. There is some foul treachery in this, which I must fathom."

Stepping to the back of the chair which occupied the throne, he pressed with much force against what appeared to be the solid stone wall. Again a heavy door swung back, revealing another narrow passage. He seized the dim lamp, and, entering with a half-hesitating step, he wound along the narrow hall, and, after a distance of several rods had been passed, he emerged into another open space. It was difficult to say, if one was to judge from light, how near this apartment might be to the outer edge of the rock, as it was night, and the darkness without almost rivaled that within. But, a gentle and refreshing breeze gave evidence that this cave was near the open air.

Francois had scarcely reached the center of the open space, when his foot struck something upon the floor, and he came near falling. He raised the lamp.

"Pedro! Dead! And by violence, too, as here upon his temple is a great gash, and another upon the neck, both of which must have been mortal wounds. Poor fellow. He must have fought nobly, as he is scarred and bleeding in a hundred places. And his body is scarcely cold, proving that the work has just been done."

A further search revealed three more bodies, horribly mangled and dead, while a

fifth was still breathing and conscious, although evidently near his end.

"Mason, who has done this?" cried Francois, as he bent over the bleeding form.

The man attempted to speak, but a large gash in his throat prevented the sound from assuming any definite words. As if conscious of this, he turned his eyes upon the entrance of the cave, and made a significant motion with his hand.

"All killed!" said Francois, in tones of evident agony. "There must have been treachery practiced here, as five men could have held that narrow passage against a thousand."

The dying man motioned in assent.

"You were surprised?" asked Francois.

The man shook his head.

"The villain came as a friend, with letters from our chief?"

The man motioned in the affirmative.

"His name was Hernando Cortini?"

A motion answered, yes.

"And my sister! Do you know aught of her?"

The dying man seized, although with a feeble grasp, the hand of Francois. He pointed to his wounds and then to the cave entrance.

"I understand you," said Francois; "you received your mortal hurt in defending her!"

A smile flitted across the face of the dying man; he pointed to the dead bodies of his late companions; there was a slight quiver of the frame, and then all was still.

There was, during the latter part of the past century, two powerful pirate chieftains, who spread terror throughout the waters of the Gulf. The names of these bold outlaws were respectively Lorenzo Clanricard and Vestivalli Chireni. The former was a Spaniard and the latter an Italian. The former was supposed to be the less powerful, as his band was smaller, and he had only small craft at his command, while the latter had under his control a powerful ship of-war, and two small but fleet sailing vessels, and a yacht, with which to cruise the inland waters. Clanricard was supposed to make his headquarters near the "Sisters," upon the Mississippi, but the authorities had never been disposed to seek him there. Chireni's quarters were near the mouth of the river, where both the Gulf and the broad waters above were under his control.

On one occasion the rivals had met. A brief but sanguinary fight ensued, which resulted in the Clanricard flying from the spot to save his tight craft from being torn in pieces by the heavier guns of his enemy.

As he turned to fly, Lola Clanricard, the daughter of the chief, appeared upon the deck of her father's boat. She was as beautiful a creature as the sun of Southern Spain had ever shone upon. Chireni saw her. The result was, that the pirate, a short time after, proposed to the father for the hand of his child, and that they should no longer be enemies, but unite their fortunes. Clanricard spurned the offer with contempt. In the first place, nothing could have induced him to listen to the proposal, for Clanricard was a high-born Spaniard, while Chireni was of low origin.

Clanricard knew that his enemy had sworn the most bitter vengeance upon him and his band, so incensed was he at his rejection, and that he had sworn to get possession of Lola in some manner. But the proud father had no fear, as he did not for a moment suppose that Chireni would dare approach his quarters, even if he could succeed in ascertaining their location. So he gave little heed to the threats, but still he doubled the guard at his cave during each absence, simply as a matter of precaution.

With a heavy heart Francois returned to the inner cave. He seated himself in the throne chair, while he bowed his head upon his hands, as if lost in the contemplation of the scenes which had occurred during his absence. He did not hear the grating of the hinges as the heavy stone door swung back, nor did he observe the entrance of a stately figure, until the sound of a deep voice called him to consciousness.

"Lieutenant Clanricard, why are you seated here inactive while your sister is being borne away a captive by our relentless foe, Chireni?"

The speaker was a man of powerful frame. His hair was of an iron gray, and worn long. A heavy beard of the same color adorned his face. His dress was much the same as that worn by Francois. His face was very expressive, and although stern, there was a shade of sadness resting upon it. The young man sprung to his feet as he heard the voice.

"Father!"

"Have you not already divined the meaning of Lola's absence?"

"I confess, father, that I had not. I feared that Black Wolf and his band had abducted her."

"No doubt! No doubt!" muttered the man, whom the reader has recognized as Lorenzo Clanricard, the renowned chief of the St. Francis "pirates."

"Why then did you speak of Chireni?" asked the son.

Clanricard remained thoughtful a moment and then replied:

"Chireni has possession of Lola. I was simply saying that I had no doubt that Black Wolf is his confederate."

"But Black Wolf, even if he has no love for us, has no more for Chireni. Why should he serve him?"

"Gold is powerful. And I have some suspicion that even the guard left behind have been bribed. Else how could he succeed in gaining possession of my child?"

"Father, how know you that Lola is in his power?"

"Conrad and big Nathan were coming up the river, and just below Hollow Rock they saw a large party approaching in boats, and concealed themselves. Lola was with them, a captive, and Conrad at once recognized Chireni. It was useless for the two to attempt a rescue. So Conrad hastened forward to inform us, while Nathan is upon their trail, and will endeavor to give us information where she is taken. I believe these Yankees are more faithful than many of our own countrymen."

"Father, you intimated that the guard left behind had not performed their duty."

"I did."

"Come with me, and let their bodies attest their faithfulness."

Francois then led his father into the second cave, where the dreadful sight met his gaze which Francois had first discovered. The father gazed upon the scene in silence, and then returned to the inner room. Francois handed him the letter which he had found, and related the particulars of his interview with the dying man.

The mystery was explained. Chireni had forged the letter. He had received a written reply from Clanricard relating to the marriage proposal, and was thus furnished with a knowledge of his handwriting, which he was enabled to imitate to perfection. It had deceived Lola, and the pirate was thus enabled to bring his supposed attendants into the inner room, and gaining a knowledge of the secret door connecting the guard-hall, had opened it, and made his attack from that direction.

Lorenzo Clanricard stood silent for a few moments. His brow was as black as night, and the proud curl of the lip bespoke not only the agony of mind but the pangs of wounded pride. That his most bitter enemy should thus triumph, annoyed him greatly, while he really loved his child, the only being upon the earth to whom he was really attached, with the exception of his son. In a moment he raised a small trumpet and blew a shrill blast. The massive stone door was thrown open, and a hundred men of savage mien, entered the cave. There was a look of anxious inquiry upon the face of each.

Silently they waited for their chieftain to speak.

Lorenzo mounted the platform and seated himself in the throne-chair. Francois took his seat upon the right.

"Men, you have done your duty nobly," said the chieftain, "and a thousand doubloons are yours, each and every man. I freely give you my share of the gains, and I know Lieutenant Clanricard will join me in this. His share will also be divided among you."

"Long live our noble captain! Long live our brave lieutenant!" were the cries which almost rent the rocky ceiling.

"Bring wine and food," cried the chieftain. "The men are weary, faint and parched with thirst!"

Two powerful Africans sprung forward as if familiar with the place, and soon the table was freighted with that which might well tempt the palate of an emperor. With an evident appreciation of the "good things," the men fell to, while their leader watched them with an eager gaze. The viands vanished, and the wine went merrily around. Wine and conviviality are synonymous, and the bandit soon felt himself a king. Songs and merriment were the order of the night, and it was merging into morning, when the chief called the attention of his men. All listened in silence to his words, as each had become aware that some desperate enterprise was to be undertaken, but were not apprised of its nature.

"Men of the Clanricard clan, you occupy your accustomed places. But some are absent. Where are they?"

All were silent.

"I will tell you. A hundred thousand doubloons fell into our hands last night, and not a man was injured. Nathan remained behind of his own accord. Your numbers are therefore complete, or accounted for, so far as those who went out with us are concerned. But we left a guard of five behind. Where is Pedro, Mason, Richard, Nolan and Pierre?"

The men glanced around, and finding their places vacant, they turned their eyes inquiringly upon their chief.

"You wish an answer? Then go to the outer cave. Take torches with you, that the scene may be viewed in all its horror. Then return to me."

The men sprung through the door. In a moment more their shouts attested their fury. Back they came with demoniac yells, again into the presence of their chief. The wine had fired their brain, but the sight of blood maddened them.

"Who are the murderers? Lead us to

vengeance!" were the cries which made the vault echo.

"You shall have vengeance, men, but you do not know all yet. Do you not see another seat vacant—here at my left hand?"

"Lola! Lola! The pride of the Clanricard! Where is she?"

"Stolen!"

"Stolen!" echoed a hundred voices.

"Ay, and by your bitter enemy, the Chireni of the lower country."

Silence reigned. All seemed too much oppressed to give utterance to their emotions. The murdered men were held in high esteem by the whole band, while Lola was their idol.

"Why do you not speak?" asked the chief.

"We await your commands."

"Do you not fear to march against Chireni and his powerful band?"

"No! No!" shrieked the men.

"And will each man here swear to avenge the death of his comrades, and to rescue your idol, or die in the attempt? If so, kneel around me here, and take the oath!"

In an instant, a hundred forms were bending upon their knees, and as many daggers were uplifted, while the shout rung out:

"We swear to rescue her or die!"

CHAPTER II.

LULU AND FRANCOIS—FRIENDS—A SCENE OF HORROR.

It was the day previous to the incidents related in our last chapter.

Upon the eastern shore of the Mississippi, and a short distance below the mouth of the St. Francis, there stood a dwelling of more than ordinary grandeur for that section of the country. A small wing of the building was entirely of logs, which had probably been the original habitation of its present inmates, but the addition a two-story frame dwelling, which was pure white, and partially covered with green vines, gave it a cheerful appearance. This was the residence of Alfred Jennison and his family, among whom was a daughter called Lulu, her real name being Louisa.

Lulu had wandered from her home, and, approaching a shady spot near the river, seated herself upon the green turf. For some time she sat, her eyes fixed upon the rolling waters, either contemplating their wonderful beauty, or else lost in reverie. Whatever might have been her thoughts, they were at least pleasant, for a sweet smile nestled about her lips, and lighted up her fair face. At length she spoke. The sound was scarcely audible, but it was a single word, repeated three times.

"Sorry to wake ye, Miss Lulu."

She started and gazed upon the speaker.

"Ah! is that you, Silas?"

"Well, Miss Lulu, I don't 'zactly know whether it is or not. Somehow or other, when I look at you I git conboberated all over, and kinder forgit who I be. But, I'm sorry I waked ye. And now that I've hearn that silver bell of yourn tinkle once more, you may go to sleep ag'in, and I'll stand here and watch."

"I was not sleeping, Silas."

"Wern't ye? Well, by hokey, I don't know. I think you must have had them eyes of yourn half shut, anyway, cos I'll be blowed if I can look into 'em when they're wide open."

"Why not, Silas?"

"I can't jist tell; but, somehow, every time I try it, it brings the water into my glasses, and my head begins to dance a double hornpipe on my shoulders, and the heart inside of me acts as a special partner for the 'casion."

"Why, Silas, I really begin to believe you are in love with me!"

"Luv'! Oh! jingo, Miss Lulu, luv's no name for't!"

"Would you like me to become your wife?" asked Lulu, as she gazed with a smiling face upon Silas. The latter wriggled and twisted for a moment, opened his capacious mouth like a chicken with the gapes, rolled up his eyes like an old-time parson, and, for some time, did not speak. At length he found the use of his tongue, and said:

"Don't! don't! Miss Lulu, if you don't want to see me collapse. I feel as if my bosom *would* burst," and Silas laid his hand upon his heart; "but, if you speak that way jist once more, there'll be an awful catastrophe some'ers round here, and all you'll find of poor Sile, in about a minnit after, will be a big grease-spot."

"But why do you not wish me to become your wife, if you love me so much?"

"Well, Miss Lulu, if I *can* explain, I will. The fact is, I love you too darn much. My name's Sile, and if I should touch that delicate hand, I should *sile* it for life. If I should make you my wife, it would not only sile but spile all your happiness for the rest of your life. And then you wouldn't have a husband very long, for, by the great hornspoons, if I should wake up some fine morning, and find out that I had forgot myself just a moment, and made such a mean critter of myself, and you unhappy, I would feed myself to the alligators, if they'd have any thing to do with such a breakfast. And what's more, there'd be no use talkin', for I should melt, I swow, I know I should, long before the preacher had got the knot half-tied."

"You are a good and generous man, Silas, and I regard you as a dear friend. You will let me so regard you, will you not?"

"I'll like to see the feller what said I wouldn't. But don't speak again 'bout that other kind of luv', cos I'm not such a pirate—hem! hem! I beg your pardon, Miss Lulu—them chaps as are sometimes called pirates, are mighty nice fellers, and I wouldn't say nothin' ag'inst 'em for the world. What I mean to say is, that I ain't goin' to do anything to make *you* unhappy, and all I can to make you happy. That's my religion."

"How is your friend, Mr. Warrenton?"

"Oh, Ed's all right. And what do you think? He's got a Lola, and here's somebody a-comin' what has got a Lulu."

Lulu turned her gaze in the direction indicated, and, as she saw the approaching person, the crimson mounted to her face.

"Was Lulu expecting me?" the stranger asked.

"I hoped that you would come!"

"Who is your friend?"

"Oh, pardon me. This is my good friend, Silas Mayfield."

"Oh, never mind *his* name. I know it. How are you, Frank? Give us your grip, old boy."

The person addressed as Frank extended his hand in a cordial manner, which Silas grasped and shook heartily, exclaiming as he did so:

"By jingo, Frank, you're a trump. Count on me. I'll stand by ye." Then drawing him a little apart he said, with a wink and a nod:

"Spark her up tight! Go it strong. Alers does the gals good!" Then taking his leave, he muttered to himself as he did so:

"By the Joneses, ef I had only jist half as nice a gal as that to court, think I'd be at it all the time, without stoppin' to munch my grub, or say my prayers."

"That is a strange man," repeated Frank. "But I like him."

"He is brave and generous, although, as you say, somewhat strange to those who do not understand him."

There was now a silence of some moments, during which Francois Clanricard, whom the reader has already recognized, held the hand of Lulu in his own. At length he asked:

"Dearest Lulu, what say your father and mother with regard to our union?"

"My father says—pardon me for repeating the words—that, when your pardon arrives from Spain, and you are no longer an outlaw, you may claim me for your wife. Do not be angry with me, dear Francois," she

added, seeing her lover's displeasure, "I can not bear to see you frown."

"It was not your father's words which caused that passing cloud to flit across my face. It was the recollection of the wrongs my family have suffered, and those words recalled them to my mind as if they occurred but yesterday. Had we received simply *justice*, there would have been no opportunity for Spain to extend to me the mockery of a *pardon*."

"And then we never would have met!"

"True, darling. And this repays me for all I have suffered. But if my pardon does *not* come. What then?"

"I shall think my parents will regard the happiness of their child."

"And if they should not?"

"Francois, I am yours, come what may."

"You are a twin of heaven's brightest angel, darling. But you will pardon me if I ask one question?"

"Certainly."

"Do you think your father would be in any measure influenced by the title which will again adorn the names of my family, or the palaces of old Castile which we shall tread?"

"Not in the least, Francois. He would much prefer you would remain here, where there are no titles save that which freemen make for themselves. The woman's proudest title is, her purity; the man's, the robe of *honor* that he wears, which every one may keep unspotted."

"Do you not long to visit the gay world, and mingle in the scenes of pleasure and gayety?"

"I have often felt a strong desire to travel—to behold other countries, other people. But, I believe, after all, I should feel a longing to return to this spot. Here is my home. Here is where I first learned to *love*, and here is where I would be the happiest, if my Francois could be happy, too."

"Here I shall most likely eventually take up my residence, after having made a brief stay in my native land. But, I have something especial to tell you."

"Go on."

"It is a part of the condition upon which Spain offers us a restoration, that we assist in the capture of Vestivalli Chireni, the cruel rover of the Gulf and lower Mississippi. We are to start upon the expedition soon."

"Oh! Francois," exclaimed the maiden, as she clung to her lover. "You will be in great danger, for Chireni is powerful. Indeed, his very name sends a chill through my heart. If you should be killed, I could not survive you long."

"Then we should meet above. I *must* go. It is my only hope. I shall never, so long

as your father lives, make you my wife without his consent."

"Would you forsake me?" sobbed the maiden.

"Never, dear Lulu. I would remain near you—watch over you—ever love you, and be to you a brother. But, I respect your father, and his full and cordial consent must be received before Lulu can be my wife, much as I love her."

"Then you have that consent now!"

Lulu and Francois both sprung to their feet. They recognized the voice and stood waiting the approach of the speaker. But he did not make his appearance. At length the lovers stepped forward from their leafy retreat, to see the retreating form of Mr. Jennison. They comprehended the state of affairs in a moment. The old gentleman had listened to much of the conversation between them, and he was so much pleased at the frankness of Francois, and saw so plainly that to refuse his consent would be to crush two loving hearts, that he expressed his assent to their union, but did not pause to observe the effect produced. Francois caught the maiden to his breast, and imprinted upon her lips the kiss of betrothal.

Long the happy couple sat upon the green earth talking of future bliss.

"I see we are bound to be interrupted," said Francois, as he pointed to a young man who was seen approaching the spot.

"Ah, that is Edward Warrenton, one of our neighbors. You have met him before, have you not?"

"I do not recollect ever having seen him, although I think I have heard the name."

"Why, he has often been up to the settlement on the lake."

"Oh, yes. I recollect him now. I think I have heard my sister mention his name."

"Very likely. They have met several times, and Edward loves her."

"Truly, think you?"

"As truly as you love me, Francois."

Their further conversation was interrupted by the arrival of young Warrenton. There was a cordial greeting between himself and Lulu, and then he extended his hand in a frank manner to Francois, which was accepted in the same spirit. A few words passed between the friends, and then Edward continued his course toward the Jennison mansion.

The lovers reseated themselves, and Francois remarked:

"Warrenton impresses me as a noble fellow. Does my sister really love him, think you?"

"He believes so, although I think he has never spoken to her upon the subject. They first met by chance. They have met quite

frequently of late, *apparently* by chance, but no doubt there was much of *design* about it. On his part I know it is the case."

A rifle-crack was heard, and Lulu sprung to her feet with a scream. A bullet had passed between her and her lover, slightly cutting the flesh of her left arm. They were so seated that Lulu's arm was resting against Francois's side, and he doubted not the shot was intended for him. Still, he remarked:

"I have no doubt but that was a stray shot from some hunter, and not intended at all for us, although it came uncomfortably near. But your arm is bleeding, Lulu. Let me lead you at once to your home."

This was done, and bidding her an affectionate farewell, the young man bent his steps toward the river's bank. He reached an elevated point, and gazed upon the river.

"By heavens!" he cried, "there is the red pinnace of Chireni! What does he *here*? Has he dared to pass the forts below? Truly he is a reckless villain, thus to venture into this distant quarter to fight my father. I thought the word he sent by his two messengers months ago, but an empty boast; but here he is, or some other enemy using his bloody colors or bloody sign of his calling painted on his boat. Ha! another craft! It is a barge crowded with men. No doubt they come to give us battle. And they are turning into the St. Francis. I must start at once and inform my father, that we may be prepared to meet them. Strange that the rascal has discovered our retreat, and has been able to penetrate to it. There is a traitor somewhere."

Another bullet whizzed by him, and he became convinced that the person who sought his life was upon the same side of the river as himself. He sprung into his boat, and pulled for the opposite shore. Then, with great rapidity, he pressed forward. It was but a few moments before he heard the reports of a single gun in rapid succession. He knew that his father had a small fortification, with a single gun mounted, about four miles from the mouth of the river; and, as he had been absent all the day, it was possible that the old chief had been warned of the advance of his old foe, and was prepared to meet him. The young man therefore turned his steps in that direction.

"Whew! how you run!" cried a voice behind him.

Francois turned and saw Silas following him.

"You du beat a copper-skin on the foot. Jist hold up a bit till I git my breath, and then I'll go along. Never seen a fight yet, and I want to see jist how it's did up. Reck'n you'll let me have a hand in?"

"You may assist us if we require it."

"Push ahead, then. Bla-zes, hear them barkers!"

It was not long before Francois and Silas arrived at the scene of action. The story was soon told. Clanricard had heard that his enemy was advancing a few moments after Francois had left that morning. He had lost no time, but taking his entire command, started for the fort. Every thing was arranged to meet the daring and insolent Italian.

The freebooters advanced, unconscious of any immediate danger. The work was masked. When the pinnace and transport were exactly opposite, and not more than twenty yards from the muzzle of the piece, it hurled its terrible missile directly into the first boat. At the same instant a hundred rifles sent their death-messengers among those crowded upon the transport. The cannon-ball struck the red craft on its forward quarter, cutting all open, and carrying death before it. A yell went up which would have made the heart of a demon quake, and again the gun was discharged with unerring aim, and a second volley from the rifles swept away the men in the transport like a whirlwind.

The smoke cleared away. Oh, what a sight met the gaze. Scarce a dozen men escaped, and these, reaching the wood, made a rapid retreat. Not a man of the Clanricards had been injured. The pinnace was but a wreck, and the barge was deserted, with all its stores.

Clanricard's men were much fatigued with their long and rapid march that day, and it was determined to encamp for the night.

"Thus ends the first expedition of Chireni against us," exclaimed Francois. "Father, how many of the enemy do you judge there were upon the pinnace and transport?"

"I should judge there were at least a hundred."

"There appeared to me to be a much larger number as I saw them from the opposite bank of the river. Did you see them, Silas?"

"Yeas, every beggar of 'em."

"How many did there appear to be, think you?"

"I should say there were at least two hundred."

"I estimated them at least that number. But we were at so great a distance we could not judge correctly."

"Wal," said Silas, springing to his feet, "this is my first scrimmage. But, by golly, it sha'n't be my last. I swow, I feel quite like a scout. 'Bout face—for'ard—double-quick—march!"

"If you are a scout, you had better pass the night in camp," replied Francois.

"All right, gin'ral," and Silas seated himself with the most evident self-satisfaction.

CHAPTER III.

LOIS AND THE PIRATE OF THE GULF.

JUST after the boats of Chireni had entered the St. Francis beyond the sight of Francois, the transport drew up near the shore, and, throwing out a plank, landed a hundred men, headed by the Italian chief himself. They immediately took up their march for the interior, toward the quarters of Clanricard.

One of the Clanricard adventurers, becoming enamored of Lulu, had left the band, and, to be near the object of his passion, had become a serving-man on the farm. He was at first obedient and faithful, but ere long displayed the ardor of his attachment and, as a consequence, was peremptorily discharged. He swore the most bitter vengeance, not only against Lulu, her father and family, but against Francois, who, he was satisfied, was the accepted choice of the maid. Making his way down the river, he at length found ways and means to join Chireni upon the Gulf, and gave him an accurate description of the country where Clanricard was quartered. The name of this villain was Tom McMillen. He also gave a glowing account of the beautiful Lulu, hoping that this would further stimulate the pirate to venture up the river. To see her in the pirate's power was now the height of his desires.

Chireni's first lieutenant, a repulsive fellow called St. Pierre, finding that he was to be left behind in command of the vessels and forts, bargained with McMillen to the effect that, if he would make a prisoner of Lulu, and bring her safely down the river, he would pay her captor a hundred doubloons, and, at the end of a year, she should become the captor's prize. Tom's eyes glowed at the proposition, and he vowed it should be done.

It was upon the information given by this fellow that Chireni was enabled to penetrate Clanricard's resort. For nearly the whole night the march was kept up, without the slightest suspicion of the fate which had overtaken their comrades. Chireni judged that Clanricard would learn of the pinnace and come out to meet it. He never dreamed but that those on board would be able successfully to contend with, or even to capture the whole party, as he had been led to believe that fifty men would sum up their entire number. He himself intended to come up upon Clanricard's rear, capture any who might escape the first party, seize the girl Lola, the treasure, and then return, after

having exterminated the entire band of Clanricard. He was aware that Spain had offered to restore Clanricard to all his former power and property if he would accept the proffered pardon, and assist in the capture of Chireni. He therefore laughed in bitter scorn at the prospect of his soon having his hated foe and his beautiful daughter within his grasp.

Toward morning the band halted, and gained a little rest. Soon after daylight, a scout was sent forward, who returned, saying that he saw the band, armed to the teeth, moving down the river. He could not tell their exact numbers, as the underbrush hid many of them from view, but he thought their force had been very much underrated.

"No matter," said Chireni. Then selecting four of his men to act as escort, he proceeded *without* arms to the mouth of the outer cave. He had directed the balance of his men to proceed around the hill, out of sight, and come up to the back of the rocks. A party of ten were to cautiously enter the cabin, and await a signal or directions from him. The others were to hold themselves in readiness to dash at the cave entrance when required.

Chireni went boldly forward. He was challenged.

"I have a letter for Miss Lola from my friend, her father, Count Clanricard," was the prompt response.

The guard, knowing that their chief had gone to meet Chireni, and not knowing but the letter might contain important orders, invited the visitors to enter the cabin, and he would apprise Lola of their arrival. The letter was received by the guard, while the strangers passed within the hut.

In a few moments the stone door was thrown open, and Lola entered. She was indeed beautiful—so beautiful that Chireni started back in absolute awe. And when she spoke she appeared more lovely, if it were possible.

"Captain Cortini is most welcome, since he is my father's friend," replied Lola, as she extended her hand.

"You are very gracious, sweet lady," replied Chireni, with gallantry, as he pressed his lips respectfully to her hand.

"Will not the captain step into the inner apartment?" she asked.

"With great pleasure," replied the pirate.

Lola led the way, and soon she was seated beside her visitor, little dreaming whom she was entertaining.

"Shall I serve the captain with wine?"

"If the lovely Lola pleases."

The maiden blushed at the compliment, if compliment it could be called, but made

no reply. Placing a variety of bottles upon the table, she said:

"Will the captain be pleased to help himself to such as he prefers?"

"Oh, certainly;" and he took the brandy.

"Is the captain recently from Spain?" asked Lola.

"Oh! I am not from Spain. I am from South America, and have very little affection for the Spanish Government."

This declaration appeared to please Lola; still, she was ill at ease in the society of her visitor.

"By the way, Miss Lola, my attendants are weary, and I dare say thirsty. If you will permit, I will offer them a little wine."

"Oh! most certainly, captain."

"Here, Ransom, Jack, you thieving dogs, come here."

They entered.

"Here is brandy," he yelled. "Take out a dozen bottles, and drink deep. But, don't make beasts of yourselves!"

The men seized the bottles and returned into the hut.

Lola sprung to her feet upon hearing the first rough word uttered. She had never heard such expressions as long as she had remained in that secluded spot, among the outlaws of her father's band.

"Signor Captain, what am I to think, at this unusual conduct?" she asked.

"Think!" responded the villain, "why, think that in my own native South, we only drink *aguardiente*. And when we get hold of this hell-fired brandy, it makes me wild. Gad, wine and women are my delight! Bright wine, and moist, vermilion lips! I've had the wine, so give us the latter!" The wretch staggered forward, as if to embrace the maiden.

She sprung to the door behind the throne-chair, and pressed against the spring. It flew open, but, as she was about to bound into the hall, the villain seized her, dragging her back into the palace cave, exclaiming:

"That second door is just what I wished to find. Here, my men!"

Ten armed ruffians bounded into the room.

"Give the signal to the men without. And you, dash through this door and make clean work of those within!"

The order was quickly obeyed. The clash of arms, and the groans of the dying, told of the deeds of horror which were being enacted but a few feet from the terrified girl. At length a shout told the story that the work of death had been finished.

Chireni had held the maiden in her seat, laughing as he listened to the sounds without. When all was still he called to his followers:

"Take brandy," he yelled; "a dozen

bottles each. But be careful. We may have more work to do anon."

The liquor and a quantity of provisions were conveyed into the open air, and the men continued their revels.

"And now you know who I am?" asked Chireni.

Lola Clanricard possessed all the fire peculiar to the Spanish character. After the first sensation, which was that of terror and surprise, had passed away, she began to be more herself. In reply to the question of Chireni, she answered:

"You *may* be a Spanish captain; but Spain, bad as she is, would shame to own you. You may have the authority to arrest my father, but you have not the power."

"By heavens, fair lady, your tone and manner but add beauty to your face, and make me appreciate the more my lovely prize. I love to be opposed. It kills monotony. I love the roaring billows, the raging tempest, the clash of arms, the dying shrieks, and the howlings of the dogs of war. All these are my delight, and almost daily enjoyment. I'll add to these a woman who scorns, and then my happiness will be complete. Ha! ha! ha!"

"You are Chireni!" she almost shrieked.

"Ay, Vestivalli Chireni, the pirate of the Gulf—the monarch of the ocean."

"What is your purpose here?"

"My principal object is to gain possession of *you*, as old Clanricard's most precious possession. After I have captured your father and brother, and exterminated his band, I intend conveying you to my house upon the Gulf, where we will further resolve what shall become proper. The cabin of the Sylph will equal your own home in elegance, and you shall want for nothing but freedom."

With a sudden bound Lola sprung upon the villain. A bright blade glistened in the light, and then descended. But the pirate, anticipating the act, caught the weapon and hurled it upon the floor.

"You have cut my arm," he muttered.

"Have a care. It were better for you to secure my respect and good-will, for if I hate, I'll wreak the greater vengeance upon your father."

"My father has a hundred men under his command, and you dare not injure me or attack him."

"I have *two* hundred men under *my* command. A hundred are here, awaiting the return of any who may escape the others, who are coming up the river."

Lola felt a sensation as if of fainting, at this announcement. But, recovering in a moment, she added:

"Still, you will not triumph. My father

is loved by all the inhabitants within a circuit of twenty miles around, and they will fly to his assistance."

Chireni laughed in a sarcastic manner, and then replied:

"Think you I am not aware of this? And, knowing it, do you suppose I have not taken the necessary steps to be fully prepared to meet *any* force brought against me? For a month I have had agents among the Indians. I have plied them plentifully with whisky, and distributed money and presents among them, and Black Wolf is now at the head of three hundred men, ready to assist me at any moment."

The brave girl's soul was thoroughly aroused. She stood defiant before the villain, her eyes emitting such darts of indignation, that even the pirate dared not encounter them.

"Alvarado, what is the matter?" he exclaimed at this moment, springing to his feet.

A man, covered with blood, had just entered the apartment. It was the second-lieutenant of the Italian chief, who had been left in charge of the pinnacle. The man sunk into a seat, exclaiming:

"All is up. Not ten men remain."

"Are you mad?" yelled the chief.

Alvarado went on to relate all the particulars of the disaster. Chireni was almost frantic with rage. Lola deemed it prudent not to add to his irritation, and remained silent.

"Call my men together!" yelled Chireni. This being done, he seized the maiden, and the band commenced their retreat. It was not a moment too soon, as but a short time elapsed before Clanricard and his band arrived.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PURSUIT.

THE Clanricards, after their success, rested for the night, and the next morning started for their headquarters. Francois, longing to get but a single glance at the spot where his heart's hopes were centered, had left the party, and taken the country route. He arrived at the quarters in advance of his friends as narrated in the first chapter. The chief and his band arrived soon after, when the scene we have described occurred.

The band, fired by wine and the victory they had gained, and excited by the sight of their dead comrades, slept but little that night. In the morning they were ready for any enterprise. They were about to start in pursuit of Chireni, when Nathan came up.

"Well," exclaimed the chief, "have you discovered the direction our foe has taken?"

"They halted at the junction of the St. Francis and the Mississippi. They have been joined by Black Wolf and about three hundred of his warriors. And, what is worse, they have taken the gun which was in the fort, and planted it in a work they have erected on the southern bluff of this river."

Clanricard was silent for a moment, as if in deep thought.

"Never mind, captain," cried a dozen voices. "Lead us on. We will conquer or perish."

"No," replied the chieftain. "I love you too well to thus imperil your lives."

"Hoorah! hoorah! Death to the varmints! I'm comin', an' so's Ed."

It was Silas, who now approached.

"Silas, have you made any discovery?" asked Francois.

"Diskiv'ry! Blamed if I hain't diskiv'r'd more'n ever Christopher Columbus did! *She's* gone. That ornery thief, McMillen, tuck her."

"No, Silas; my sister is in the hands of Chireni."

"*Your* sister!" responded Silas, opening his eyes wide. "That's more trouble."

"What is it? To whom did you refer when you spoke of McMillen?"

"Why, to Lulu, to be sure. Tom McMillen's got her. Tuck her last night."

Francois's face betrayed the agony of his heart at this information.

"Jist don't look that way, Mr. Frank, for, by gravy, we'll lick 'em like thunder."

"Silas, they are four hundred strong—a hundred of their own cut-throats, and three hundred Indians, while we have only one hundred, all told."

"Pshaw! You don't say so!"

"It is a fact, Silas."

"Guess you didn't hear about Ed Warrenton, did you?"

"No; what of him?"

"He'll break his heart, e'ena'most, ef he can't catch the villain. He's comin' to j'ine you."

"He shall be welcome. It is *one* more at least."

"*One* more! By jewhalloppers, I reckon you'll find it about fifty more!"

"What do you mean, Silas?"

"Why, I mean this. That, jist as quick as Ed found out that Lulu was gone, he says, says he, 'That'll go tough with Frank.' And so he went to work and got all the boys together last night, and—and—here they come."

True enough, winding up the pathway came the body of men, led by Edward Warrenton. A shout which made the old woods ring greeted their approach. A few words

of explanation passed between the chief and Warrenton, and then the entire army, consisting of about one hundred and thirty well-armed and determined men, moved forward. Ten men were detained to take the pinnacle, armed with one gun, to a point a short distance above that where Chireni had halted.

During the march, which consumed the entire day, Silas kept the party in good humor by his ludicrous antics and queer sayings. Now he would bound forward swearing that he saw an "injen," and that he meant to have his scalp, and then he would return "darning" their "cowardly picters." Even Clanricard and his son, notwithstanding their cause for sorrow, could not repress a smile.

The party arrived at the old fort, the scene of the terrible tragedy, where they halted. The pinnacle had already arrived. It was now growing dark, and a consultation was held. It was decided to delay the attack until daylight, as there was little prospect of a sudden movement on the part of Chireni.

It would be dangerous to fire upon the works of Chireni, as Lola was there, and the Italian would doubtless place her in a prominent position, in order to prevent it. It was determined that a party, among which should be Clanricard's veterans, should cross the river during the night, and place themselves in the rear, and as closely as possible to the works, and await the proper moment for an assault. The thick forest would cover their approach. This party was to be led by the chief in person, while Warrenton was to act as his aid. Francois was to make a feint directly in front, which would lead Chireni to believe that he was ignorant of the numbers he had to encounter. The gun was to be placed in position, and discharged in a furious manner, taking care, however, to fire too low. The motive in waiting for daylight was, that there would be great danger of injuring Lola in the darkness of a night attack. The pinnacle was to be moved forward, but kept beyond the range of the gun which Chireni had mounted upon his works.

"Which party will you accompany?" asked Francois, addressing Silas.

"Wal, I kinder think I'll lay around loose a bit, and keep my eyes open for something to turn up. Bet ye I sha'n't be idle. The smell of gunpowder, t'other night, made me as ferocious as a lobster. Besides, I shouldn't wonder if Lulu was there, and you *may* bet I'll do some fightin' if she is. But, for the present, I'll stay with you, Frank."

The party succeeded in crossing the river,

and by ten o'clock were concealed among the trees not twenty yards from the works. It appeared to be a propitious moment, and Clanricard had almost come to the conclusion to make the assault at once, but at length determined first to ascertain if his daughter was really there, a prisoner. He crept cautiously forward, with this intention.

Meanwhile Francois and his men took up their position directly opposite. They were entirely concealed from view.

"I'm goin' to try an experiment," exclaimed Silas.

"What do you mean?" asked Francois.

"I'm goin' to visit them works. I can swim like a duck."

"You will expose us all, and destroy our plans."

"Darn'd a bit. I'll be as cautious as a woodchuck. I think to-night is jist the time to tackle them fellers. So I'm goin' to find out if Lulu or your sister is there. Don't be skeered about me." Saying which Silas started for the river. He entered the water without hesitation and soon reached the opposite shore. He could see the shadow of sentinels as they walked their beat upon the top of the breastwork, and hear their slow and irregular step. He was not long in coming to the conclusion that they were drunk. He heard within, the sound of many voices. Some were cursing, some singing snatches of songs, and boisterous with laughter. Among them he could readily distinguish the voices of Indians. As the night advanced the sounds grew fainter.

"All drunk, by jingo!" muttered Silas to himself. He then crept carefully up the steep bank, and along the side of the work.

"Thunder, what's that?" exclaimed Silas, as he came in contact with some object. He reached forth his hand and found it was a human form.

"Dead drunk, or I'm a Turk."

"Hush! Don't speak!"

"Why, Gin'r'l Clanricard, as I'm a Christian!"

"What are you doing here, Silas?" asked the chief.

"I 'spect much the same as you. Scoutin' around a bit."

"Have you discovered anything?"

"Nothin', 'cept they're all drunk, inside. Now, I'll tell you what I'm goin' to do. You jist lay quiet here, till I creep inside, and see how the land lays."

Silas crept forward in a cautious manner. He reached the rear of the work, but found it was stronger there than upon the front or sides. He judged that there must be some opening, and keeping on his way, he soon found a narrow passage under the logs which formed the breastwork. But directly

before it lay a huge Indian, entirely blocking the entrance.

"Must git that chap out of the way," said Silas. "Wonder if the red is drunk?"

Silas extended his arm and gave the sleeper a slight shake. He did not move. Another and more vigorous shake was given, still the Indian remained perfectly quiet. Silas now attempted an entrance. In doing so he had to crawl directly over the sleeper. He had nearly passed the body when the savage sprung up, and seized him, exclaiming:

"Who? Who?"

Silas had calculated all the chances, and was ready for any emergency. He caught the savage by the throat, hurling him back upon the ground, exclaiming as he did so:

"Lay down, you darn drunken cuss. If I did give you whisky, I didn't tell ye to make a beast of yourself, did I? Besides, you're so near that hole if any of old Clan's men should come along they'd cut your wizen in a minnit. Lay down, I tell ye."

The Indian was evidently satisfied, for with a grunt he settled himself back for sleep.

"What's all that row about?"

The question came from a distant part of the inclosure, and the voice was harsh and commanding. Silas prostrated himself and for some moments remained quiet.

"That's Chireni's voice, sure as shootin'. Must keep my eyes open." Silas then gazed around the fort, but could distinguish nothing, the darkness was so intense. He crept forward with the greatest caution toward the spot from whence the sound proceeded. Occasionally he would come in contact with some sleeper, who would utter a fierce oath at being disturbed. But on every such occasion he settled himself quietly upon the ground, and the renewal of heavy breathing soon satisfied him that all danger had passed.

Silas had now become uncertain with regard to the direction from which the voice came which he supposed to be that of Chireni.

"Must hear that sound again, *some way*. S'pose I've got to raise another row. Well, here goes." Silas took a pin from the collar of his coat. He soon found a group of sleepers. He crept close beside them, and reaching over he drove the pin into the body of the third person from him. Then creeping a short distance away, he prostrated himself closely upon the ground. The man who had been pierced, sprung up with a howl of pain, and commenced kicking and beating the sleeper nearest him, who was also quickly aroused, for he set up a fearful howling and began to return the blows.

The two combatants clinched, and rolled together upon the ground, fighting like tigers.

"Cease, you drunken vagabonds, or I'll cut your throats." The voice came from near the place where Silas was lying, but it did not quiet the men. The speaker, seeing this, sprung forward, and seizing the belligerents, dashed them to the ground as though they had been mere children.

"Curses upon you," he said. "Can't you drink without fighting and making such brutes of yourselves? You are all in a fine condition. Suppose we should be attacked to-night by the enemy? You are not in a condition to resist a dozen babies. This is the last time you will get liquor when you have work to do."

While this was going on, Silas had crept forward to the place from whence the voice first proceeded. There was a female seated upon the ground. It was not Lulu, but she was a captive, for she was bound. He judged it to be Lola.

"Miss Lola," he whispered, "you'll be free in just about fifteen minutes. Don't stir out of this corner till I come back, so I'll know just where to find you."

"Who are you?" asked the maiden.

"Oh! I ain't nobody, much; but, your dad and lots on 'em's on the outside. Mr. Ed Warrenton's there too. *Don't* that tickle ye?"

"I am pleased to hear that friends are near."

"Guess ye be. But, is there another gal in this 'ere place?"

"No, I am the only female here. Why do you ask?"

Silas had no time to answer, for he saw Chireni returning. He had barely time to move a short distance away. As it was, the foot of the pirate came in contact with his head. Chireni turned, and gave him a terrible kick in the side, which brought forth a suppressed cry of pain.

"Get out of my path," growled Chireni.

"Away, you drunken brute."

Silas crawled from the spot, and was soon beyond reach of the villain.

"By the great Mogul, I'll pay that rascal for that kick in about fifteen minutes. I will, true as preachin'. Guess he stove the ribs all in, darn his piratical pieter."

Cautiously Silas crept from the fort. He found Clanricard near the entrance.

"What have you discovered?" he asked.

"That Miss Lola is in there."

"Are you sure of this?"

"I just spoke to her, and told her that she will be free in fifteen minutes."

"I will make the attack at once."

"Jist hold up a bit. I want to take command in this 'ere operation."

"Well, how shall I proceed?"

"Wal, in the first place, I'm goin' to swim the river, and have Frank come over with his men and join you. We want all the men so that we can make a clean sweep. And now is the time to do the job, for the cut-throats are all drunk as lords. Now, as soon as I get back here, I'll jist go into that pen and get close to Lola. When all is ready, I will give you the signal of attack, and then you must pile in."

"How will you give us a signal?"

"When you hear a rousin' yelpin' *then's* your time."

"Will you be able to protect Lola from harm, think you?"

"Oh! I've got my part of the programme all right. I shall make a row among the men, and you must take the noise as a signal. Shouldn't wonder if I done a power of hollerin' myself. Wal, ye see, old Chireni will think his men are fightin', and go to the place to quiet 'em down. He will, of course, leave Miss Lola settin' on the ground, in the corner, and then you'll see a chap about my size catch the young missus in his arms, and jump over the side of the fort with her. Lord, I shall be quite a hero—the rescuer of female innocence and beauty! But, there is one thing I want you to do for me."

"What is that, Silas?"

"Jist give that pirate a tap on the knob for me, if I don't get a chance. I want to pay him off for a kick he gave me. If I get a chance inside, I shall prick him under the ribs. But I shall look after the gal, first."

Silas then took to the river, and soon reached Francois and his party. He gave them all the particulars, and they soon joined the chief, and prepared for the attack. Silas returned and entered the fort. The gray of morning began to be visible in the east, and no time was to be lost, for the sleepers would soon be aroused. Still, at this hour, sleep hangs the heaviest upon the eyelids and the time was propitious. Silas reached the center of the inclosure. He drew his knife, and, as before, he reached over and struck the person who had received the pin-thrust. He bounded to his feet with a yell, and commenced a furious attack upon his supposed assailant. As before, they set up a series of yells and curses, in which Silas joined most lustily. In an instant he saw Chireni approaching. He glided cautiously away, and soon reached the spot where Lola was seated. He lifted her in his arms, and sprung for the wall of the fort. A glance behind convinced him that all was working well, for the hand of Clanricard were pouring over the works.

But at this moment Silas felt a sharp pang, and falling, all became dark.

CHAPTER V.

LULU THE CAPTIVE.

AFTER Francois had left Lulu, her anxiety for his safety induced her to follow him to the river's bank. She saw him safely cross. It was but a few moments before she heard the report of the guns. She lingered near the river, although the darkness was fast coming on. In that quiet place she could have no thought of danger. But near her, and crawling through the grass like a snake, came a human form. Upon a sudden it bounded like a tiger upon her. A slight shriek escaped her, but was silenced by the placing of a handkerchief over her mouth.

"You are mine now!" cried the intruder.

"McMillen!"

"Ay, Tom McMillen, whom you scorned because he was poor—whom you rejected for that milk-sop, Francois Clanricard. But you are in my power now, and, by all the saints, I swear that you shall be mine."

Lulu did not hear these words, for, recognizing the man she so much feared, she became at once unconscious. She was the reverse in disposition from Lola, being of a nature little calculated to resist oppression, or to endure suffering.

In this helpless condition, McMillen conveyed her into a little boat, and then pulled rapidly down the stream. With the assistance of the current, he was enabled to advance at a rapid rate. Nothing of particular importance occurred during the long voyage down stream. The abductor cared well for his prize, whom he kept carefully secured, that she might give no alarm. His boat had been plentifully supplied with comforts, showing how well his plans were laid. Nearing New Orleans, he left the river, and passed over to Lake Pontchartrain. Here he secured a large sail-boat, which evidently had been placed there for his use by some designing hand. In it he put out for his voyage along the coast.

"Whither are you conveying me?" asked Lulu, as she saw the broad lake spread out before her.

"Want to know where you're going, do you? Well, I'll tell you. We're going to Tortugas. Splendid place. You'll like it."

"Is not that the rendezvous of the pirate Chireni?" asked Lulu.

"Certainly. Nice place. And they're expecting you."

"What! Chireni?"

"No, not exactly Chireni. He's got his affections fixed upon old Clanricard's pretty daughter. He's gone after her, and will fetch her back soon."

"What, then, is to be my fate?" asked the maiden.

"I'll tell ye. When your old father discharged me just because I dared to speak to you about love, I determined I would be revenged. I went at once and joined the band of Chireni. I told Lieutenant St. Pierre—that's Chireni's first officer—all about you, and he fell desperately in love with you, all from my description. So he told me if I would steal you, and bring you to him, he would give me a hundred doubloons."

Lulu uttered a cry of agony, and fell at the feet of McMillen, exclaiming:

"Oh, take me back to my father! Save me from this terrible fate, and thousands shall be yours."

"Oh, you can kneel to poor Tom McMillen now, can ye? But it will do no good. I would not lose my satisfaction for the whole Mississippi valley."

Lulu sprung to her feet, and with a bound she leaped into the water. But the villain caught her by the dress, and drew her back into the boat. He then tied her to the mast of the little craft. No further word was spoken, and at length the boat ran up beside the *La Favorite*.

St. Pierre sprung to the side of his vessel, and recognized McMillen at a glance.

"Who have you there, Tom?"

"The lady I told you about. Had a thundering sight of trouble to get her here, though. Hope you'll appreciate the trouble and danger, and all that."

Lulu, who had now given up in despair, was lifted on board, and conducted to the cabin. There she sunk down and burst into tears. Long and bitterly she wept, and the tears seemed to relieve her heart. At length she fell into a fitful slumber. After an hour or more had elapsed she awoke, and standing behind her was an old man. His gaze was earhest, but mild. It impressed Lulu with hope, and she said:

"You do not look like a bad man."

"But I am, though," was the reply.

"But you look kindly on me."

"Well, why shouldn't I? You never done me no harm as I knows on."

"And will you befriend me?" asked Lulu.

"I'm bound to all I can, miss, but I'm afraid that won't be much. I hear that you belong to the lieutenant, and if I should interfere I'd get my brains blowed out."

"What can I do? Is there no way that I can escape?"

"I fear not, miss."

"If I can reach the shore, I will wander through the woods and escape, or die in the effort."

"You would die, then, for the woods is

lined with wild beasts and savages. Or perhaps you might be taken by the Indians, and then you would be worse off than you are here."

"I do not think I *could* be in a worse situation than I am here."

"It strikes me, miss, that you forget that you have a friend here."

"You refer to yourself?"

"That's just what I do mean. You see, miss,—what is your name?"

"They call me Lulu at my home."

"And may I call you Lulu?"

"Oh, yes. It will please me to have you address me thus, for I feel that you are good."

"Well, I ain't good. But I'm going to try and do one good action. And that is to help you all I can. The moment I put my eyes on your sweet innocent face, I felt just like crying. You made me think of a little child that once called me father. That was when I was an honest man."

"If you feel thus why do you remain with this outlaw band?"

"Because I am a proscribed man. If I could once more become an honest man, I would give half the balance of my years."

"I will guarantee your pardon if you will leave this band."

"Bless you, Miss Lulu! Now, I'll tell you what I am going to do. I shall watch my opportunity, and when the right time comes, I shall pop you into a little boat, and in the darkness of the night, pull for Mobile Bay. Once there, you will be safe."

"Can it not be done this very night?"

"No. I have just been relieved from watch duty. I dare not trust the person who has taken my place. I will have to go ashore and remain in the fort, and probably will not be able to see you again until my turn for ship-watch arrives."

"How soon will that be?"

"Nearly a week. But I shall have every thing prepared in the mean time. So keep your courage up and hope for a speedy release."

Further conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Lieutenant St. Pierre. He looked suspiciously at the old man, and then asked:

"What are you doing in my cabin?"

"Well, leftenant," said the old man, saluting the officer, "ye see I heard the young miss whimpering, and so I just stepped in to see if she wanted any thing—kind of natural curiosity—that's all."

"Well, henceforth indulge your curiosity in another quarter. Go, sir!"

The old man saluted again, then ascending to the deck, he passed over the side of the vessel, into a small boat and pulled for

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shore, which was some forty yards from the spot where the *La Favorite* was anchored.

St. Pierre, whatever might have been his purpose regarding the maid, treated her with the deference which innocence inspires even in the roughest nature. A man will be cruel and severe to one of his own kind, or even to a woman who can resent her wrongs, but to an infant he is kindness itself. Its very helplessness commends it to his protection, and he would revolt at an injury to the little innocent. So with a helpless and pure-souled woman; he would be even more brutal than a savage to maltreat her or to give her unnecessary pain. St. Pierre, though a rough man, and cruel to men, was not lost to all emotions of tenderness, and Lulu's pure face, her utter helplessness, her pitiful tears—all sent a pang to his callous heart, such as he had not felt for years.

"Can I do anything for your comfort, miss?" he asked.

She only answered with sobs. His very presence frightened and grieved her.

"Lady, I am sorry to see you grieve so. You have nothing to fear here; although we are pirates, we shall treat you with deference."

"Then why keep me here? Why not restore me to my friends?" she asked, as an eager hope sprung to her eyes.

"Because we want your companionship, and I shall hope to woo and win my pretty prisoner by my kindness and consideration."

"Oh, sir, have pity—pity on my helplessness, and restore me to my friends—to my—"

She checked her speech, for the word *lover* was on her lips.

"To your lover, you would have said, would you not? That is an all-powerful reason for not restoring you. Your lover is a son of our most hated foe, and to persecute him we must keep you."

With that he left the cabin, evidently not disposed to encourage further conversation. St. Pierre for once was conquered—conquered by beauty and innocence, and he did not care to betray it to himself, much less to others.

CHAPTER VI.

EFFORT FOR THE MASTERY.

CHIRENI, supposing the disturbance among his own men arose from a drunken quarrel, proceeded to the spot to quell the same. But, at that instant, he saw the forces of his enemy come pouring over the works. Resistance would be useless, for, before his besotted followers could be aroused, and formed for defense, the greater part of them would be slaughtered. He therefore sprung

for the place where Lola had been left and reached it just as Silas was about to spring from the breastwork to the outside, with the maiden in his arms. With a blow from his sword he felled her rescuer senseless. Scaling the wall, he seized the maiden, and dashed away for the swamp with her in his arms. Far into the fastness he penetrated, until the noise of the conflict at the fort died away in the distance. Lola had rent the air with her cries for help, but, the shrieks and curses, the groans of the dying, the howlings of pain, the roar of the musketry, the clashing of arms, and the wild whoops of the Indians, had rendered all deaf to her call, and she was again in her persecutor's power.

The scene enacted that morning at the fort was most terrific. The Clanricard men were thoroughly aroused at the abduction of their young mistress, and each hand clutched his steel firmly, while the determined expression of each face spoke plainly that they had resolved to conquer or die. The settlers and traders who had followed Warrenton were scarcely less determined and it was found to be no easy task to restrain them until the proper moment.

At length the signal agreed upon by Silas was heard, and, with a single bound, and without a sound to announce their approach, a hundred men, with glistening blades, leaped over the walls. A hundred sleepers felt the descending weapons, gave a howl of agony, and sunk back in death. Others, roused by the tumult, vainly endeavored to make resistance, and in their wild confusion dealt death alike to friend or foe. A few sprung over the wall next the river, and thus effected their escape.

The sun came up in all his radiant glory to light up a bloody scene. It shone upon two hundred or more of bleeding, mangled corpses. Scarcely twenty of the Indians had succeeded in making their escape, while not over a dozen of Chireni's band had saved themselves by flight. Clanricard had only ten men wounded, and not a man killed. Of these, five of the wounded were the settlers, and five his own band, including himself, although his hurt was not severe.

"Has any one seen my child and Silas?" asked the chief, with much anxiety.

No one had seen her, and search was commenced among the dead for the bodies of Lola, Chireni, or Silas. Being ineffectual, it was continued without the wall. Silas was found, just returning to consciousness. The blood was washed from the wound on his head, which was bandaged with a handkerchief. It proved to be not very severe, although he had been rendered senseless by the blow. After he had recovered, the chief asked if he knew anything about his child,

or of Chireni. Silas rolled his eyes around, looked up toward the works, and answered:

"Last time I met her was up there. Had her hugged up close to me. Guess some scamp tapped me on the scone, for I don't recollect jist what did take place after that."

"She must still be in the power of that monster," exclaimed the father, with a sigh.

"Father," said Francois, "let us not lose a moment in the pursuit. He will, most likely, make for the river, on his way back to Tortugas."

"There is little doubt of this. Men, two hundred of the merciless villains under the command of Chireni, came up this river for the purpose of annihilating me and my band. We have had two encounters, and but few of their number remain to tell the story of their bloody defeat. We have also taught the savages a lesson that I think they will not soon forget. But, the chief has escaped, and he has my child in his power. He will no doubt convey her to his stronghold. I am familiar with the place. He can not have more than a hundred men left, I intend to follow him, until I exterminate his band, and either kill or capture him. Who will go with me?"

"We'll all go!" was the ready response.

"Yes, by Jerusalem, we'll all go, and me too."

"Why, Silas, you are wounded. You, at least, will have to remain behind."

"No you don't, gin'ral. I know I'm unlucky when the fightin's goin' on, but I guess you'll say I make a fu'st-chopscout."

"Well, you can go with us, if you insist upon it. But we shall not require our present number. One hundred men will be quite sufficient. And there are some who can not well be spared from their homes. Let Mr. Warrenton select those of our neighbors and friends who wish to go."

A hundred men were soon designated, but all insisted upon sharing the dangers and the glory, and it was finally determined to permit all but about thirty to go.

All set to work with a will. The pinnacle was brought up, other boats were soon collected, and before the day was half gone over one hundred determined spirits embarked. Before leaving, the chief addressed them:

"Friends and neighbors: I have now been in your midst two years. Is there any one present who has cause to complain of any act committed by myself or band?"

"No! no!" was the hearty response.

"No, by Jemima Jones, and there's a lot on us what owes you a heap, for mighty big favors done and received!" cried Silas. The chief continued:

"My friends, Spain has wronged me greatly. Upon a mere *suspicion*, I was arrested, tried, convicted, robbed of my titles and my estates, and doomed to perpetual banishment."

"Blast Spain's ugly pictur'!" cried Silas. The chief smiled at the interruption and went on:

"I waged war against Spain and Spain only. Men called me pirate. I termed myself the avenger of my own wrongs. Perhaps I might say, a belligerent power warring for my rights. Be this as it may, Spain feared me. She tried to crush me, but could not. She then offered me *pardon*, if I would capture that merciless outlaw, Chireni. I spurned the offer. I had done, in the first place, no wrong to pardon. I demanded that Spain should restore me to my rights and ask *my* pardon, acknowledging the injustice she had done me. This for a time she refused to do. It was humiliating. But, her unsuccessful efforts to protect her navy and commerce at length decided her. I hold in my hands papers bearing the royal seal, restoring me to all my rights. Also a private letter *requesting* me to *assist* in the capture of Chireni. I am now again a free man! I am no longer the outlawed pirate of the Mississippi, but Count Lorenzo Clanricard, with an estate of millions!"

"By ginger, you're a trump, and the right kind to bet on!" yelled Silas, after the cheers which followed this announcement had died away.

"Still further, friends. We are now going to proceed against the pirate. His stronghold will fall, and he will be taken. He has millions of treasure. Where an owner can be found, it shall be returned. The remainder, together with that concealed in the vaults of my own cave, shall be divided among all here, excepting myself and family. There is enough to enrich you all."

Cheer after cheer followed these words. When silence was restored, he continued:

"And now I have a promise to exact from my band. You will have sufficient to live in luxury. Will you return to peaceful pursuits and abandon your present mode of life?"

"We will," cried every voice.

"One thing more, and then we will move forward. There may be a few of Chireni's band who escaped the slaughter still lurking in the swamp. It is possible the pirate chief may be there himself, but I think not. He would not be apt to pause a moment. Still, it would not be amiss to search. Let those who remain behind extend their line, leaving but a few paces of interval between each man, and in this manner pass through the

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swamp. Let a small party be detailed to bury the dead and attend to the wounded, and after the search is over, return to your homes."

The pinnacle then led the way, followed by the other bateaux, amid the deafening cheers of those on board and on shore, and passed rapidly down the river.

The line being formed as had been directed, the search was commenced. Chireni heard the approach of the party. He found that he must conceal himself more effectually. He was near a stream of water perhaps ten yards in width, and two or three feet deep. He found that the current had washed the earth from the side of the bank, leaving the sod hanging over, forming a kind of covering. Into this he crept, dragging Lola with him. The water-flag, which grew thickly around, and the covering above, entirely concealed him from view. He held Lola with a firm grasp, to prevent her from uttering the least sound. He heard the voices above. One of the party exclaimed:

"Look at that huge alligator!"

Chireni turned his gaze toward the water, and there, breaking through the flags, he saw approaching the animal alluded to, his red jaws wide extended, and his long teeth glistening in the sunlight. A thrill of terror ran through his frame. He expected to feel the monster close his jaws upon him. But, at that moment, the report of a rifle was heard, a spurt of blood jetted from the mouth of the reptile, and, with a cry which appeared almost human, it turned and darted toward the deeper waters of the lake. The rifle-shot of one of the searchers had saved the villain, and perhaps Lola too.

Chireni left his hiding place as soon as his enemies had passed, and following the smaller stream, he soon reached the main stream, flowing toward the Mississippi. Gazing down the river, he saw the fleet of Clanricard's boats just disappearing from view. He had no doubt of its object. Clanricard knew the strength of his band, and that two hundred having fallen, but a hundred men were left to garrison his stronghold. Yet he did not see how Clanricard was to reach him, unless he went directly down the river and attempted to coast up the Gulf to the Tortugas. This would be a dangerous experiment, as an ordinary sea would severely try the boats, while his own vessels would sink them. He had no doubt, however, that it was the plan of his enemy to coast along with his boats from the mouth of the Mississippi to the Florida shore, and, landing his men to the west of Tortugas, make the attack by the rear.

"Poor fool," laughed the pirate. "He

thinks I do not understand his plans, and that he will land his men without my knowledge. But he will be mistaken. I can reach Tortugas before him, send out the Sylph or the Favorite, and intercept him. Then with a half-dozen shots I can send him, with all his crew, to the bottom, if the waves don't save me that trouble."

Chireni was now approached by some dozen of his men, who had discovered him. They were all who had escaped the slaughter. An old canoe was found, and the party succeeded in reaching and crossing the Mississippi.

"What is your purpose now?" asked one of his gang.

"To purchase horses directly, and start across the country with all speed."

A few miles into the interior were accomplished on foot, when the party was divided into twos, and went forward for the purchase of animals, taking different directions. They were not known to the few planters and missions scattered up and down the river, and, as they offered liberal prices, they soon succeeded in obtaining just what was required. Each one was now well mounted, and pushed forward at a rapid rate, directing their course toward Lake Pontchartrain. All that day and the following night they kept on their way without even pausing to rest. A few hours were then given, and that day and the next night ended their journey, or rather their journey upon horseback, as it brought them to the lake. Well was it that such was the case, for so rapidly had they ridden, that two of the horses had dropped from very exhaustion during the last two or three miles.

It was a bright morning. A small sailing craft was easily procured, and the party embarked. Lola was overcome with exhaustion, and she sunk into a quiet slumber as the boat swept down the lake.

CHAPTER VII.

JUST IN TIME, YET TOO LATE.

It was far advanced in the day when Lola awoke. She sprung to her feet, and gazed around her. It was a beautiful sight. The lakes had been passed, and they were crossing the bay toward the Florida reefs. Only a short distance before her lay the point of land which was once her own home. It was now the spot where her enemy dwelt. And thither she was being conveyed. The water leaped and danced in the strong breeze which was sweeping the vessel along, nearer and nearer to her destination. She gazed dreamily into the foaming waters, and a sweet smile played about her lips. This was observed by Chireni, who asked;

"Are you thinking of your friends, or of your lover?"

"Which one?" she asked, turning her gaze upon him.

"Have you more than one?"

"Oh, yes, many. My father's band all love me. But *you* love me, do you not?"

"You may spare your sarcasm, Miss Lola."

"I suppose it is sarcasm to speak of such as you being capable of love."

"Not so, lady. If you will be kind and affectionate to me, I will show you that I *can* love as well as hate."

"Indeed! And do you not think your band will love me too?"

"I have no doubt of it."

"And what if I should say to your band that I would become the wife of him who would *kill* you; what do you think the effect would be?"

There was a look of surprise upon the faces of those occupying the boat. Chireni bit his lips, and the blood mounted to his face as he noticed the expression of his men.

"I'll take good care you get no such chance," he muttered, between his teeth, and then added: "You would not be such a fool!"

"I would do it, if no other mode of escape presents itself. But there will be no occasion for that. I shall be rescued. Shall I tell you a dream I had while sleeping here?"

"It matters little."

"Well, I will simply give you the fate of the murderous Chireni as I saw it in my dream. I saw you hanging by the neck, while the buzzards were fattening upon your flesh, and your bones were bleaching in the hot sun."

"And where were you all this time?"

"Standing beside my father and my brother."

"Indeed! And shall I tell you what to *me* will be a *reality*?"

"As you please."

"It will be your father's bones that will hang bleaching in the sun."

"Look you, Chireni, you will find me a burden, if I am not mistaken. If you *sleep* even in my presence, I will kill you. If you are not constantly on the watch, you will suffer the same at my hands."

"You are not judicious, Miss Lola. If you had kept your motive a secret you might have accomplished your purpose. But now I shall act upon the old adage, 'Never leave a weapon in an angry woman's way,' and keep those little hands with which you propose to do so much mischief constantly and firmly tied."

Twilight now settled down over the face of the waters, and soon the sea was lit up

with its myriad of stars. The watch was set, and all composed themselves to sleep, save those on duty. Fatigue soon visited their eyelids, and even Lola was off in the land of dreams. Long past midnight the sleepers were aroused by a cry from the watch.

"Boat ahoy!" bawled one of the men from the fore-quarter of the little craft.

Chireni arose, and saw close in to shore, and near at hand, a small boat, in which was a rower and a woman. This boat was pursued by another containing two men, whose whole strength was put into the chase. Then the single rower was seen to rise in his seat, draw an aim on his pursuers with a rifle, and to fire. One of the two men gave a fearful yell, sprung overboard, and passed from sight. Now it was that Chireni recognized St. Pierre as one of the pursuers. The chief at once bore down upon the fleeing craft, and, ere long, overhauled it. What was Lola's surprise at beholding there her friend Lulu Jennison!

St. Pierre soon came up, and explained that old Reuben, under cover of the night, had assisted the prisoner from the cabin window—that Tom McMillen had discovered the attempted escape, and together they had pursued. It was McMillen whom the old man shot, evidently hoping thereby to escape; and he would have distanced St. Pierre, had he been the only foe to contend with.

Old Reuben was secured, and Lulu soon found herself beside Clanricard's daughter, again moving over the water toward the hated ship. Ere long the two girls were passed into the cabin and left to themselves—prisoners in the hands of a relentless and cruel man.

Neither could give the other any definite information. Lulu supposed her friends to be entirely ignorant as to where she had been taken. Lola knew that her father and his band had started in pursuit of her abductor and his band, and had met the enemy near the mouth of St. Francis, but what the result of the terrific battle, she could not tell, though she believed it must have ended in the capture or extermination of Chireni's band, otherwise that chief would not thus have taken to the swamp, and then returned with only a dozen attendants. It might be possible, however, that the pirate had simply become separated from his band. In any event, she believed that they would soon be rescued, as it was not in her father's nature to rest when so much was at stake.

In the mean time, a scene was transpiring on deck which requires attention.

The captain's vessel, Florentine Sylph, was anchored in a small bay, or stream,

which extended up into the main-land for a short distance, and was almost entirely concealed by the heavy live-oak by which it was surrounded, whose giant branches were hanging in dark masses over the water. So near the bank did the vessel lie, that a single plank connected it with the shore.

Upon the deck of the captain's vessel, an hour after his arrival, were collected a dozen men, the lieutenant, and his chief. They had been relating to each other the events of the past few days. The captain looked crestfallen, but revenge glared from his eye. As if to express the passion within him, he at length called:

"Let Reuben Burton be brought up."

In a few moments the old man was brought forth, his hands chained, and his eyes tightly bandaged. He walked forward with a firm step.

"Reuben, you dog, what have you been doing?" asked the captain.

Reuben was silent.

"Why don't you answer?" he yelled, as he struck him a violent blow.

"I did not know that the captain was speaking to me," mildly replied Reuben.

"He was addressing a dog."

"He was speaking to you, and be careful that you answer him the next time," was the reply, as another blow was inflicted.

"I am neither dog nor beast," answered Reuben. "Or, if it be so, it has been caused by my connection with *you*."

The officers gazed in silence upon the man for a moment, and then asked:

"What was your motive in assisting that girl in her attempted escape?"

"I will tell you, sir. When I first joined the band of Chireni, I was an honest man. I believe I am one yet."

The officers laughed.

"Wait until you hear me through, and then judge for yourself. I know I am to die to-night, and before I die I intend to confess every thing. Will you hear me through before you murder me?"

"Go on."

"When I joined your band, two years ago, I thought they were wreckers, and not pirates. I soon found I was mistaken—that your trade was blood. I had become one of you. If I escaped, I feared I would be recognized and executed for a supposed participation in the crimes you have committed. Two years before joining you, the wife that I loved left me for a better world. A few months after, my child—an only child—a daughter of sixteen, followed her mother. I became a desolate man, without a tie to bind me to the great world. I came here. But, after discovering the great error I had made, and finding that I could not return,

I determined to become your opposer—to foil you in your attempts at villainy as often as it was possible for me to do so."

"Hang the dog, this instant!" yelled the captain.

"I have but a few more words to speak, and then I shall be prepared for my fate."

"Well, go on. In the mean time, Mason," said the captain, addressing one of his men, "take this rope, mount the mast, go out on that yard-arm, and throw this noose over the branch of that live-oak. It is to that he shall hang. I have business in the Gulf, and must sail at once. But this traitor shall hang to that tree until the flesh drops from his bones, as a warning to others who would play me false."

The captain saw his order obeyed. The rope was thrown over the extending branch, the noose placed around the neck of Reuben, he in the first place having been removed to the shore, and four men were detailed to draw him up, fasten the rope to a small sapling, and then spring upon the vessel again, which would start at once for the wide waters. Twenty additional men had been brought on board to man the guns. The anchor was raised, the sails set, and all being ready for a move, the captain said:

"Now go on. You have one minute more to speak. Stand ready, men."

"Do you recollect," cried Reuben, his voice raised as if in defiance, "the escape of Captain Williams's beautiful daughter? I was the means! Do you recollect Cora, the Spanish maiden—Miss Bright, the American—Julie, the French girl, and Mrs. Branch, the beautiful English wife and mother? These were all rescued—"

"String the dog up—I'll hear no more!" yelled the captain.

The order was obeyed, the rope made fast, and the man sprung on board the vessel, leaving the form of poor Reuben dangling and writhing in the air, as the vessel dropped into the open waters of the Gulf.

"No ye don't, not by a darned sight!" yelled a voice. "Any man what has befriended poor Lulu sha'n't be hung by any such sneaks as you be." As these words were spoken, the body of Reuben came tumbling to the ground.

"Quick, men. In that tree! A villain has cut the rope. Fire. Steady—there's a swarm of devils in the fort—steady, at the helm—Clanricard and his band are here."

The order was obeyed; and, as the vessel moved forward, a volley was poured into the oak, and Silas came tumbling down into the water, exclaiming, as he was falling:

"Darn good scout; alers jist in time, but infernal unlucky in a fight."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CLOSE-QUARTER CONTEST AND THE FLIGHT.

WE must return to the Clanricard clan, pursuing their foe to his lair.

Nothing impeded their progress, and in time they arrived at a point a few miles above New Orleans. Here Clanricard disembarked his men, and taking his ammunition, his small-arms, and his single light brass piece, he conveyed them, together with provisions, across the narrow point of land between the Mississippi and lake Pontchartrain, and at length arrived at the point where his vessel, the *Lola*, had been concealed two years before, in charge of a trusty guard.

She was lying in the identical spot where she had been left. The slight damage she had sustained by remaining so long inactive, was quickly repaired, and the *Lola*, with her sails set, and a long gun mounted fore and aft, and with over one hundred resolute men to man her, plunged gallantly through the waters.

It was by no means the intention of Clanricard to let his approach to the pirate's quarters be discovered, or to make the attack by water. He designed landing his men and marching upon the stronghold, surprise it from the rear, and crush the villains at a single blow.

It was about the twilight hour when the little *Lola* drew up at a point upon the Florida coast, a distance of near five miles from Tortugas. A large majority of the men were landed and placed under the command of Francois Clanricard and Edward Warrenton. This was to constitute the party to surprise the fort and the old war vessel, while the chief would proceed with the *Lola* close along shore, and endeavor to surprise the *Sylph* and *Favorite*, before they could be made ready for action. It was agreed, in order that the attacks might be simultaneous, that a signal should be given by those on shore, when they should arrive near the works. This was to consist of flashing a little powder, which could be seen, but would cause no report. The *Lola* then would press forward, while the surprising party did the same.

The signal was given. Clanricard was perfectly familiar with the waters in this vicinity, and, giving his craft to the wind, she moved easily forward. As she reached the old ship, the chief saw his men already pouring into the works on shore, and that the surprise in that quarter was complete. In a brief time the *Lola* ran up by the side of *La Favorite*, the lieutenant's vessel, which was only occupied by a covering guard. The grappling-irons were thrown out.

In a moment her decks were occupied, and the true condition of affairs was ascertained. A bright glare now lit up the sky. A heavy report was heard, and then another, and two monster messengers of death came crashing across the decks of the *Favorite*, and buried themselves in the side of the *Lola*. Clanricard saw the Florentine *Sylph* making for the open sea. It was just as she had left her moorings after the attempt to hang Reuben, which had been timely interrupted by Silas. Clanricard saw that it would take some time to get the anchor of the *Favorite* up, her guns shotted, and her sails set, while his own vessel was ready, and a much faster sailer than the Chireni craft. He therefore sprung on the deck of his own vessel, taking with him thirty men. He cast her loose, and she went bounding after the *Sylph*. Again a stream of fire was seen. This time there were *four* reports. The deadly grape rattled among the rigging of the gallant little vessel, while her frame trembled and groaned beneath the shock of the iron missiles which came crashing through her hull.

But, she was not silent. Her long guns sent forth their contents with terrible accuracy and effect. One of her shots tore away the prow of the *Sylph*, and the other buried itself in the cabin. Again the *Sylph* replied, and the *Lola* staggered like a drunkard under the appalling shock. Her decks were strewn with the dead, the wounded and the dying, and were crimsoned with human gore. Still, she was about to send forth her second volley, when Chireni and the lieutenant appeared upon the deck of the *Sylph*, leading the two maidens, placing them up in full view.

"Hold! Do not fire!" shouted Clanricard, but one gun was discharged. It did not harm the maidens, however, but the shot buried itself in the vessel's side, a few feet below the spot where they were standing.

"Fire, father, fire!" shrieked *Lola*, across the rippling waters.

"I will save you yet. Who is with you?"

"Lulu Jennison."

"Count Clanricard," said one of the men, "the *Lola* is fast sinking. She can not swim five minutes more."

She was immediately headed for the shore, where she sunk in about six feet of water. No one was lost. The wounded were soon removed, and carefully treated, while the dead were prepared for burial. Thirteen of the thirty had been struck and severely hurt, while five had been killed outright. The *Sylph*, glad to escape so formidable a foe, and supposing she would soon be pursued by the *Favorite*, manned by Clanricard's men, made the most rapid escape, as

that was now Chireni's object, rather than to give battle.

After the landing of the troops, Silas had pushed on rapidly ahead, to act as a scout. He arrived considerably in advance of his party. He saw the vessel on which Chireni and his party were seated, and creeping close to the spot, concealing himself by a large tree, he listened. The words of Reuben, as well as those of all others, were distinctly heard, and Silas readily understood that the old man was to suffer for having assisted Luln in an attempted escape. This he determined to prevent, but did not see how it could be accomplished, unless the arrival of his friends was very speedy.

He now heard the order of the pirate that Reuben should be hung to a tree, and saw the vessel being prepared for a movement. When the cord was thrown over the branch of the oak, a bright idea seemed to strike him, and he mounted the giant tree. So thick and heavy were the limbs, that he found no difficulty in keeping himself concealed. He saw his friends pouring over the walls of the fort, just as Reuben was drawn up, and the vessel moved away. He crawled forward on the branch, and severing the cord with his knife, the old man was thus released without having suffered any material injury.

"Hoorah! Glory hallelujahorum. Oh! oh! oh!"

The attention of those on the vessel's decks had been attracted by the voice of Silas, and they at once discharged a volley of musketry among the branches of the oak. One of the balls struck Silas upon the thumb, cutting it badly, and bringing forth the "oh's." He forgot his situation, and throwing up his hand, he placed his thumb in his mouth, much as the school-boy, when his fingers have become benumbed by coming in contact with his master's "ruler." By this movement he lost his hold, and came tumbling down, yelling:

"Darn good scout, but alers unlucky in a fight."

The distance of the fall could not have been less than forty or fifty feet. In his descent he struck against several branches, each time calling forth a grunt. And when he struck the water, it was flat upon his back, and the *slap* caused a report like the discharge of a dozen rifles. He was knocked senseless, and would have drowned, had not Reuben, after removing the halter from his own neck, sprung into the water, and brought him safely to land.

In a short time Silas had recovered. He heard the noise of battle within the fort, and the roar of cannon upon the water. This

roused him to such a pitch of excitement, that he forgot his pain, and cried:

"Come, Reuben, you're all right. Jist come along with me and fight like the devil, and you sha'n't have a darn hair of your head harmed 'cos you belonged to them pesky pirates." Saying which, Silas sprung forward and mounted the fort, bounding into the inside. But the fighting had now ceased. So sudden had been the attack, and by such overwhelming numbers that only a few blows had been struck, and not many killed, before the balance threw down their arms and called for quarter. Francois immediately ordered his men to desist.

The pirates were then drawn up into line, and Francois asked:

"Men, have you served that villain, Chireni, of your own free accord?"

"We have not!" was the response.

"Why did you not leave him?"

"Because, we had become pirates before we knew that we were such, and then we had no alternative but to remain. We couldn't turn honest if we wanted to, for the moment we went where honest folks lived, we would be exposed, and then hung."

"What do you mean, by saying that you became pirates before you knew that you were such?"

"Why, that when we went with Chireni, we thought it was to act as wreckers. And we were told that the business was lawful. Chireni then told us that his country was at war with other nations, and that we were to act as privateers, which was also perfectly lawful. After we had captured a few ships, he then told us that we were all pirates—that the Government had offered large rewards for us, and that if a man left him, he would be exposed and executed."

"Why did you not mutiny?"

"We were going to kill the captain and lieutenant to-night, take the vessels, and then go somewhere where we were not known."

"Why have you not done this before?"

"Because the captain had two hundred Italians with him whom he brought across the water. They liked the business—wanted to remain pirates. We were always kept apart, and without arms of any account. If we had shown any signs of mutiny, or even been overheard talking together upon the subject, his men would have murdered us all."

"Do you know the fate of the two hundred who went up the river?"

"We do not."

"But twelve returned. The remainder are dead."

"In what manner did they perish?"

"Do you know who *we* are?"

"We do not."

"Well, upon yonder little vessel is the famed chieftain, Lorenzo Clanricard. A portion of these men belonged to his band; the others are our neighbors. The Italians fell by our hands. Now, let me ask you one question, and I wish you to answer me truthfully."

"We will do so."

"If you were to receive a full pardon, would you leave this life and become honest citizens?"

"Oh, yes, yes!"

"I am not authorized to offer you pardon, but I am sure my father can procure it for you. Remain where you are for a short time. We shall pursue the villain, Chireni. As soon as communication can be had with the authorities, I think I can safely promise you freedom."

A rousing cheer followed this announcement.

"What in thunder's all this yellin' about?" asked Silas, as he came bounding over the works. Then seeing everything, he continued:

"Wal, I guess if the job is done up here, I've had my share *there*. Jist twig that thumb."

The chief now entered. The arrangements for a pursuit were commenced. It required considerable time to attend to all the details. Provisions must be placed on board the vessel, for it was not known what might be the length of the voyage. Then came the ammunition. A large quantity might be required, and this was soon in the magazine. A hundred of the men were selected, while the balance were to remain and guard the place until the return of Clanricard. It was not an easy matter to procure a commander for those remaining behind. Warrenton must go with the pursuers, and Silas would not accept the position, declaring that he was "only fit for a scout, 'cos he was so darned unlucky at fightin'." It was finally decided that the brother of Warrenton, called Albert, should remain.

All things ready, the vessel occupied by Chireni's lieutenant, "La Favorite," dashed forward in pursuit of the escaping pirate of the Gulf.

CHAPTER IX.

INTO THE JAWS OF DEATH.

CHIRENI's vessel, the Florentine Sylph, was nowhere to be seen. It could not have been gone a sufficient length of time to have entirely disappeared from view, had the latter part of the night been as clear as the earlier portion. But the moon had gone down and a mist was gathering over the surface of

the water. It was, however, one of those light mists which disappear with the first rays of the morning sun.

Clanricard judged that his enemy would make all possible haste, as he might be sure that he would be pursued. He also presumed that the pirate would make direct for Cuba, the eastern portion of which afforded the most excellent places of concealment or defense. It was in this direction that the Favorite was headed.

Early in the morning the mist cleared away, and, at a distance of perhaps six or eight miles, dead ahead, the Sylph was discovered. All sail was crowded on, and the chase commenced.

At the same time Chireni discovered that he was pursued. The Sylph had already been crippled by the guns of the Lola, and was in no condition to make fight, more especially as she was poorly manned. The pirate knew that Clanricard would not fire a gun for fear he might injure the females, but that he would overtake and board her. This he would be able to do, as the sails of the Sylph had been considerably torn. Nor was she as fast a sailer as the Favorite, and the superior numbers of Clanricard would render the conquest an easy one.

The brow of Chireni frowned threateningly, as he gazed upon his enemy. He ordered the maidens to be brought upon deck, which was done. He pointed to the vessel, and exclaimed:

"You see?"

Lola smiled as she replied:

"I knew we would be rescued! Your fate is now decided."

"Not yet. I never shall be taken alive. I can reach the island before they can overtake us, and among those rocks I have prepared positions where I can defend myself against a thousand. I am always ready for any emergency. There are scuttles in the bottom of my vessel which can be opened with a few moments' work. Had the proud Clanricard been likely to overtake me upon the water, I should have sunk the vessel and went down with it, for I would sooner die than fall into his hands. And look!"

The two vessels were but little over a mile apart. Clanricard saw that the pirate was making for a rocky point, where he would be able to make a vigorous defense. He therefore made an effort, by hugging the land, to cut off the Sylph. It was at the moment when Chireni called the attention of his captives to some object, that a large war-vessel suddenly appeared from behind a small island where it had been concealed. It was not over two hundred yards from the Favorite. Without waiting to hail, she opened a broadside. The little craft was

nearly torn in pieces by the terrific shock. She reeled and surged, and scarcely time was given to remove her men, her wounded and her dying, before, with a desperate plunge, she disappeared from view beneath the waters.

Chireni well knew the meaning of this. The *La Favorite* was well known in the Gulf as the craft belonging to St. Pierre, the pirate lieutenant. Of course it was presumed that St. Pierre was her commander, and that the men were Chireni's pirates.

"Thus ends the pursuit," said Chireni, laughing.

Lulu covered her face and burst into tears, while Lola could not conceal the agony of her heart, although she did not weep.

On board the war-vessel a terrible scene was presented. Mangled forms were lying upon the deck, writhing in their agony, while others sat pale and silent.

"You, I take it, are the pirate St. Pierre?" exclaimed the commander, addressing Francois.

"You are wrong, sir," replied Francois.

"Well, perhaps a lesser villain. Possibly you are Chireni in person."

"No, sir. Chireni is in yonder vessel, and we were in pursuit."

"Who then, sir, have I the honor of addressing?"

"I am Francois Clanricard."

The commander gazed upon him a moment, and then asked:

"Were you in command of the *Favorite*?"

"No, sir. It was commanded by my father."

"Count Lorenzo Clanricard?"

"The same."

"Where is the count?"

"Have you succeeded in finding my father?" asked Francois of Silas, as he came up just at that moment.

"No; reckon that broadside kinder used him up. Oh, you ugly black-muzzled thief," continued Silas, addressing the commandant, "I'd jist like to choke you till your face was blacker'n your whiskers."

The commandant simply smiled at this remark, and then addressing Francois, said:

"I knew the vessel you commanded, both by sight and name. I have been watching for her a long time. I had a right to suppose you were the pirate of the Gulf. Will you explain how you came in possession of the *Favorite*?"

Francois went on to relate all the particulars. When he had concluded, the commander said:

"No doubt you have papers by which you can identify yourself as the son of Count Clanricard."

"My father had, sir."

The commandant smiled incredulously. It had become well-known that Clanricard had recently been restored to all his rights. He did not doubt but that his prisoner was the Lieutenant St. Pierre, and that he was using this subterfuge with the hope of being set at liberty under this false impression. He answered:

"I regret, sir, that I cannot take your simple word. But I shall be compelled to convey you all to Moro Castle. If you are what you represent, no doubt you can make it appear. If you are Chireni's men, you will be recognized at once, for there are two persons in the castle who were prisoners for nearly three months at Tortugas."

"Gone up, by ginger!" exclaimed Silas.

This was a very injudicious remark, as it led the commandant to believe that they feared to meet any person who had been with them, lest they should be recognized. But it was from the fact that old Reuben Burton, who had formerly been one of Chireni's men, besides three or four others, who had accompanied Clanricard, were almost certain of being recognized, and that would stain the character of the whole party. Silas attempted to explain the presence of these men, but he did it in such a bungling manner that it did not produce any favorable impression.

"Well, confound your pictur'," continued Silas, "you ain't agoin' to let that feller run off with them two gals, be you?"

"If there are female prisoners on that vessel, we shall endeavor to rescue them if possible. There are four vessels of light-draught behind that island. These will soon be in pursuit."

"And if you come within range of her, pray do not fire, else you may kill my sister and another equally dear. Chireni has not fifty men on board, and he can be boarded, as his vessel is already crippled."

"Yes, and by the great long-horned spoons, if you hurt a hair of them gals' heads, I'll haunt you, true as preaching."

The war-vessel was now got under way, and nothing of note transpired until the frowning walls of Moro appeared in view. To Francois it looked like the vault of death. But a short time since he was standing by his father's side, contemplating the final and successful result of their expedition. The enemy was almost within their grasp, his extermination and the rescue of loved ones certain. An instant sufficed to crush all present if not all future hope. The father was gone, the enemy escaping, and the maidens were still in captivity. Forty bleeding forms were lying near him—generous men, who had gone forth to brave death simply from a sense of right. Many of them had

left their homes high in expectation, and would never more return. The water was crimson with the gore that single broadside had shed. And now they were approaching a prison from which they might be released only after a weary captivity.

A landing was soon effected, and the prisoners ranged within the walls of Moro. Two men were brought forth, and the commandant said:

"I wish you to examine these men, and state if you have ever met any of them before."

The two persons passed along the entire line, and then said:

"Two of them we recognize."

"Who are they?"

"Chireni's pirates."

This was deemed evidence enough to render close confinement necessary. Our friends were at once placed within the damp dungeons of the castle.

"Well, Frank," said Silas, "this is kinder tough, ain't it?"

"Yes, it is hard that we should be mistaken for Chireni's men, and be compelled to suffer in their stead. But we must bear it like men."

"Yes. But that's 'tarnal hard to do. But we hain't got the worst of it. I'm thinking about them poor gals."

"Poor children! Surely Heaven will not desert them."

"Wal, I'm goin' to scout around a bit. This is a dark hole, but, by ginger, it must have an outlet somewhere."

"And would you escape if you could?"

"Decidedly."

"It would imply guilt on our part."

"What in thunder do I care what it implies? I tell you my neck's worth more to me than all the opinions of the hull of Cuba. I'm uncommonly ticklish about the neck."

"They do not execute by hanging in Cuba."

"How then?"

"With the guillotine."

"What in the name of Sally Jones is that?"

"An instrument which severs the head from the body."

"Gosh! Don't let's talk any more about it."

Silas commenced his explorations of the apartment. It was totally dark, but he crept carefully around, feeling the walls and the earth. From its dampness he was satisfied that they were below the surface of the water. Should this be the case, it would preclude the possibility of an outlet. And yet, in certain parts of the vault, he could distinctly feel a circulation of air, as if coming from an opening. At length he exclaimed:

"Darn good scout. Jingo, Frank, here's a big hole in the wall as high up as I can reach. Come here, some of you fellers, and give me a boost up on your shoulders, so I can get up and explore."

This was done. After waiting a while, Silas said:

"I can hear the rippling of water, as if it was dashing against the stones, and I can see something that looks like a bluish light. Jist hold on a bit till I insert my body."

"Be careful, Silas."

"Oh, you needn't be concerned about me. This passageway runs down a bit. Now if you'll make a rope out of some of your coats, so that you can pull me out if I get into any scrape, I'll jist go down and see what's the matter."

It required but a few moments to 'manufacture' a long cord sufficiently strong for the purpose, and Silas, tying it firmly around his waist, began his descent. He had advanced perhaps twenty feet in a downward direction when he found the water. As far as he could judge from the single ray of light that shone through, it was not stagnant, and of course must have some direct connection with the waters of the harbor outside the castle. Whether it came simply through the crevices of the lower wall where the masonry had been washed away, or whether there was an opening of any size, of course he could not tell. But he determined to ascertain at any risk.

He therefore ascended to the opening in the vault, and said:

"Frank, I must have more rope. I'm going jist as far as I can. Is there any one here that can't swim?"

"I can not," answered a single voice.

"Then I tell you what you must do. After I find how the land lays, I'll let you all know. The signals I will give will be these. If I want you to pull me back I'll jerk the rope once. If I jerk it two times, that means I'm coming back. Three times, will mean that you may come ahead, as it's all right. In that case you can jist hitch the end of the rope to that feller that can't swim, and I'll pull him through. Then you must all follow."

Everything now ready, Silas commenced his second exploring tour. He went this time headforemost, as the passage was too small to admit of his turning. He soon reached the water. Rapidly as possible he urged himself forward. But the passage grew narrower, and mud and filth obstructed his advance. He reached a stone wall, and through the crevices he saw the light beyond increasing. He removed a large stone without difficulty. But by this time he had become so suffocated for want of

breath, that he could endure it no longer; and, giving the rope a single twitch, he was drawn up to the aperture. After blowing the water and mud from his face, he said:

"Guess it's all right, boys, but you've got to wade through a power of mud. I'll have to make two or three trips before I git the way clear, but, one thing is darn certain: that place leads somewhere, and it can't lead to a worse place than the field where that human chopping-knife is at work. Now, remember the signals."

Again Silas plunged into the water. He reached the wall, and removed other stones. The opening was sufficiently large to admit the form of a man. But again he must breathe, and he gave the rope *three* powerful jerks. There was no evidence of his being drawn back, and, almost suffocated, he queried to himself:

"Darn my buttons, but I believe I've given the wrong signal. I forgot how they run. I can't stand this, and I can't get back. Guess I'll dive ahead, anyway."

Silas crawled through the wall, and began swimming toward the light. At length, when his brain was almost bursting with the pressure upon it, and he was about to cease further effort, he reached the surface, and fell nearly exhausted upon the earth.

In a few moments he felt a vigorous twitching at the rope, which recalled him to consciousness.

"That means pull up the man that can't swim," said Silas. "But first let me take a squint at the location hereabouts." He glanced around and found that he was on a narrow strip of earth bounding the old castle. It was entirely barren, and in no manner connected with the main land. There appeared to be no means of escape, except by swimming, and this would be difficult, as the harbor was full of small craft. Luckily it was growing dark. A renewed tugging at the rope reminded him of those in the dungeon, and he commenced pulling away. In a moment he landed the non-swimmer beside him. Another and another came rapidly to the surface, until at length every man was present excepting the wounded, who had been placed in another apartment. It would be impossible to render them any service.

It now became incumbent upon the party to devise means of escape. But one course could be adopted—they must swim.

It was decided that they should await the hour of midnight, or at least until the passing upon the bay had ceased, and the moon had sunk from view, and then that squads, of not more than ten, should swim to the beach, a distance of two thousand yards. This had been nearly accom-

plished. The last squad, among which were Francois, Silas and Reuben, who were assisting their comrade who could not swim, had nearly reached the shore, when a gun, fired from the castle, announced the escape of the prisoners. Scarcely had they landed, when a body of Spanish soldiers came pouring over the mason-work, and our friends were again in the hands of their foes.

CHAPTER X.

A LAST RESORT.

WHEN Chireni saw the vessel sink, which contained his mortal foe, his first impulse was to turn and sail to a point where he could bring his own guns to bear upon the war-ship. He knew she was an ungainly craft, and could not move with any celerity in the water, and perhaps he might batter her in pieces, and thus destroy a powerful enemy and the remainder of the Clanricard's men, who he saw had been rescued. This he could easily do with his long guns at any time, when in good condition. But, he was now considerably disabled. And while undecided how to act, he saw four light vessels put out from behind a little island, and make directly for him. These he knew to have been recently completed, and for the express purpose of crushing the bold pirate.

The outlaw saw that his only mode of escape now was to run ashore, and reach the point for which he was making, before his foes could overtake him. He had, some years previous, fitted up a mansion upon the island, and liberally supplied it with servants, whom he kept in his own interest by lavishing upon them large sums of money. Fear of punishment, also, was one great reason why they kept his secret. And here he had passed much of his time, representing himself as a Spanish gentleman of fortune, and no one suspected his identity. But now his star was waning. His band had been nearly destroyed, and fear would no longer influence the few remaining. He had treasure left, sufficient to purchase and equip two more vessels. If he could reach the coast of South America, he could repair his loss, as he was not known there.

He determined to proceed at once to his mansion, and then make the proposition to his men. A small craft lay concealed in a little inlet at the southern extremity of the island, which was sufficiently large to transport the balance of his treasure, and his few remaining men. The vessel bore the appearance of an old wrecker's craft, and would excite no suspicion.

After reaching the shore, Chireni commanded that the Sylph be set on fire. The men demurred somewhat at this, but, as they saw their enemy rapidly approaching,

and the fact became apparent that she must either be destroyed or seized, the command was obeyed, and the Florentine Sylph was soon enveloped in the destroying element. Thus ended the second vessel which for two years had baffled every pursuer, and been the terror of the Gulf.

Chireni led the way, followed by the maidens, St. Pierre and the men.

He took his course through a deep ravine, and, after proceeding perhaps two miles, he diverged, passing through a narrow, but well-beaten pathway, up a sharp acclivity. Finally he emerged into an open space. Just before them, and standing near the edge of a precipice, was a large, old-fashioned mansion. There was nothing especial about it to attract attention, further than its location, and this might be the choice of almost any person of a romantic turn of mind. The building itself was of the old Castilian style of architecture, somber, massive, and in no manner corresponding with its surroundings.

In front of the mansion was a broad lawn, covering several acres. Near the dwelling were flowers faded, and flowers just springing into bloom. Grass green and grass withered with age. The shrubbery with half their leaves brilliant with youth, and the other half withering. The season was June, and the tropics were at hand with their never-ending periods of growth and decay.

The strangest part of the arrangement was the *rear* of the dwelling. Here there was a precipice of nearly a hundred feet. The rear base of the mansion had been built upon mason-work or stone wall, of about fifteen feet in height. The work was of the most massive description, not a sign of a crevice, or of a loosened bit of mortar appearing in any direction, save at one point, a small leaden spout protruded, which was evidently intended as a water escape.

Reaching the mansion, Chireni was admitted by an old negress. Without a word he strode forward through the large hall and entered a spacious apartment. This surprised the old attendant, who had never seen the "master" arrive without a kind word for all. As Chireni seated himself in the large room, his men also entered and quietly settled themselves upon the elaborate furniture which adorned the apartment. The pirate gazed around him with evident surprise, and then asked:

"Have you forgotten who I am, that you thus enter my apartment unbidden?"

"No," replied one of the men. "We remember too well who you are; and that is just the reason we have come to the conclusion not to stand any longer upon ceremony."

"Do you dare—"

"Don't put yourself in a passion, Chireni. We *dare* do any thing."

The villain, for the first time in his life, appeared to smother his rage. In a moment he said:

"Men, we have been successful for two years in these waters. Misfortune has now fallen upon us. But we can repair it all. I have sufficient left to build, equip and man four vessels, which in every respect will be superior to those we have lost. Will you not join me?"

"What mode have we of leaving the island?"

"I have a good vessel in Ferardo Inlet."

"And to what point shall we steer?"

"South America. The city of Angostura, on the Oronoco, will afford us a safe retreat. There we are all unknown, and can have vessels built which will be more than a match for those Spanish war-hounds."

"Where is the money to come from to cover the expense?"

"I have it at command."

"We have not received any thing recently. Is not the money equally our own?"

Chireni saw the drift of the conversation, but he answered:

"Perhaps it is so."

"Then I will tell you what *I* propose to do," said one. "And, I doubt not, I speak for the whole of my comrades. You, Chireni, have been captain a long time. You have not dealt with us to our satisfaction. Neither has the lieutenant, St. Pierre. Now what we propose is this. There are seventy-three of us here. We will *hold an election* for the places you have filled. Our choice shall now give us our commanders."

"Very well," replied Chireni, "go on."

The ballot was proceeded with, and it was soon announced:

"For captain, Pedro Robero."

"And your lieutenants?" asked Chireni, his brow pale with rage.

"We have decided to defer their election until our ranks are full."

"And what with regard to your present captain, myself and St. Pierre?" asked Chireni.

"You are to enter the ranks at once."

"And if we refuse?"

"Death."

The pistol of the chief echoed through the apartment, followed by a second report. A shriek of agony was heard, and then a heavy fall. The smoke cleared away, but neither Chireni, his officer, or either of the maidens were to be seen.

"Quick," yelled Robero, the captain elect, "surround the house. No doubt they have some means of escape which we must cut off."

It was but a few moments before the building was entirely surrounded, and men, bent upon the death of their former chief, were watching, while a dozen within were prosecuting the most vigilant search.

It was late the following day when Pedro discovered a secret panel in the ceiling, and touching the spring, a chasm was exposed to view. A party were about to descend, when a voice came from below which was at once recognized to be that of Chireni.

"We are in the powder-magazine. If any one attempts to descend, he will meet with certain death. And before we will be taken alive, we will fire the mine already prepared, and blow ourselves and all within or near this building into eternity."

CHAPTER XI.

SAVED AND HONORED.

WHEN the terrific broadside of the huge war-vessel struck the little Favorite, it was, as we have said, very destructive. Ten solid twenty-four-pound shot crashed through her sides, while six heavy guns, double-charged with canister, swept her decks. Forty mangled bodies were swept into the Gulf, aside from those who fell bleeding upon her own decks.

Among the wounded was Count Lorenzo Clanricard. A ball grazed the side of his temple, cutting a slight, but, considering the location, not a dangerous gash. At all events, he was rendered insensible, and staggered into the water. The confusion was too great for this to attract attention. But with the instinct of a drowning man, the chief clutched a fragment of wood which had been torn from the vessel. This saved him from sinking. The waves were rolling heavily, and the tide running full and strong toward the little island, and Clanricard was thrown upon the bank almost insensible.

In this condition he was found by one of the small vessels which had been concealed behind the island, and which were now starting in pursuit of Chireni. He was taken on board, but, for many hours, remained too weak to give any explanation. The pursuit was continued. At his leisure, the officer commanding bent over the unconscious man, and thinking him no other than the pirate Chireni, or one of his prominent officers, commenced the examination exclaiming:

"By heavens, this is the Count Lorenzo Clanricard."

A more thorough examination was made, and the real facts of the case were soon rendered apparent. Still, it was near midnight before the count was sufficiently recovered to converse. He was then informed that

his men had all been taken prisoners, and that they were being conveyed to Havana, under the impression that they were Chireni's men. No time was to be lost, and the vessel, with Clanricard on board, was headed at once for Moro Castle, in the Havana Harbor.

It was just as day was breaking that the vessel drew up at Moro. In the mean time an order had gone forth to the effect:

"Let the pirates be taken into the plaza, and guillotined at sunrise."

It had been rumored, in the early portion of the evening, that the notorious Chireni had been captured, and would be executed, together with his band, at an early hour the following day. But during the night it was circulated among the crowd, who had not slept, but had kept up their revelries during the whole night, in anticipation of the morrow's sport, that the pirate and his men had escaped. Yells of discontent and dissatisfaction followed this, and men rushed frantic up and down the narrow streets of the city, shrieking for blood, and all the combined efforts of the police were powerless to stay them.

The soldiers, however, had succeeded in capturing the prisoners, and were ordered to conduct them through the principal streets to the plaza. The excited populace at one time made a rush upon the prisoners, and the soldiers found considerable difficulty in protecting them from mob violence. But, at length, they arrived in the square where the guillotine was glistening, and surrounding thousands awaiting their feast of blood.

"Do you call that a Christian institution?" asked Silas, as they approached the spot, and his eyes fell upon the fatal knife.

"Silence!" exclaimed an officer.

"Blast your pictur', but I won't silence. I'm in a free country—no, I don't mean that—darn your old fort, ye never will be free till the Stars and Stripes waves over Moro; but I was born in a free country, and dang me if I don't give you a piece of my mind before you tap my windpipe."

"Be quiet, Silas; it will do no good," said Francois.

"But I can't be quiet when I meet such a pack of heathens."

The prisoners now reached the square, and were arranged around the horrible machine. The officer in charge then stepped forward and read as the first name upon the list for execution, "Silas Mayfield." Then the officer and his assistants stepped forward to lead the victim upon the scaffold.

At that instant a horseman dashed to the spot, and in an excited manner cried:

"Stay—stay the execution!"

He handed the officer in charge a paper.

Our friends were immediately released, and it was announced to the crowd that the representations first made were indeed correct; that the prisoners who were about to suffer were really those who belonged to Clanricard, or volunteers who had joined him in the expeditions for the capture of Chireni, and that the pirate band had nearly been exterminated. The desire for vengeance upon these men was at once changed to the most extravagant acclamations, and when, a few months after, the famed chief rode up, the enthusiasm knew no bounds.

The meeting between father and son was of the most affectionate character. Silas was almost beside himself with joy, as were the remainder of the men.

But there was not a moment to be lost. The pirate must be pursued and captured at all hazards; and, while the city rung with *vivas* for the Count Clanricard and his noble band, they embarked upon a vessel which had been provided for them, while others were provided for the soldiers which were to accompany the party for a land-search.

In a few hours the squadron had reached the point where the pirate vessel had been burned. Over a hundred troops were landed.

Reuben, who supposed that Chireni would take refuge in the mansion, led the way thither. It was but the work of a few moments to surround and seize the men of the pirate band, who were still upon the watch. Clanricard, who was in command, questioned the men, and found that Chireni had taken refuge in the magazine, and had threatened to blow the building to atoms, sooner than be taken. The count was about to enter when Reuben exclaimed:

"Stay. There are secret passages leading in various directions from the mansion, and perhaps the villains have escaped."

At this instant there was a terrible explosion. The old mansion was lifted from its foundation, and for a moment trembled in the air, and then fell, a mass of shapeless ruins, while the red flame shot forth. Clanricard covered his face, and groaned in agony, as he exclaimed:

"Oh, my poor child, is this your final fate?"

"It is simply a ruse on the part of the villains. They are *not* under those burning masses," said Reuben; "but no doubt they are concealed in one of the long passages, and far from danger. They only await our departure, under the impression that they must have been killed, to emerge and effect their escape."

"Then, by thunder, I'm going to do some more scoutin'," exclaimed Silas. "I'm great at that business."

Saying which, he crept along the base of the wall, avoiding as much as possible the falling embers. He was followed by Clanricard, Warrenton, Reuben and others. Francois commenced his search at another point. A mass of rough rocks attracted his notice, and he clambered up their ragged sides. He was seized by a powerful hand, and a struggle for life was there commenced on the very verge of that yawning gulf. A shriek from Lulu, and the cursings of the pirate St. Pierre, attracted the attention of those below. There were the two men clutching each other's throats in that deadly struggle, tottering upon the edge of that chasm. Those below held their breath in an agony of suspense.

But it was a brief death-grip. Both lost their footing, and were falling over the rocks. St. Pierre threw up his hands wildly, while a shriek of terror escaped him. In an instant he went tearing down among the branches of the palm and thorny trees below. When he struck the ragged rocks, only a sightless, shapeless mass remained of the wretched officer.

Francois had nearly shared the same fate. But Lulu, with frenzied energy, seized him by the arm, thus saving his life at the moment when it hung by a breath. Once again they met as only such can meet. The meeting was witnessed by those at the base of the wall, and a wild cheer rent the air. They were about to advance to join the happy pair when yells from Silas commanded attention.

"Hold on! I've got him! I've got him!"

Turning, they saw Silas tugging away at a leg which was protruding from the wall. In a moment Chireni was dragged forth. He sprung to his feet, glaring upon Clanricard, and then, drawing a knife, he sprung upon him. But Edward Warrenton saw the intention of the villain, and, quick as thought, he buried his own blade in Chireni's bosom, who fell back with a groan. Lola was safe, and with more than words she thanked the savior of her father.

What shall we say more? Clanricard, the chief, after a brief stay in Spain, returned and settled upon the Mississippi. While there, he procured the pardon of Chireni's men. Francois and Lulu are happy together, while Warrenton is no less so with Lola. Silas has given up scouting, and is employed upon the farm of the Jennisons, together with Reuben.

Those who were the pirates of the Mississippi are now its heroes.

THE END.

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